

SAN JOSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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INTERVIEWEE: Theron E. Fox

SUBJECT: Family background, career in newspaper, radio and  
publishing, community activities, San Jose  
Historical Museum involvement

INTERVIEWER: Ellen Garboske, SJHM Volunteer

TRANSCRIBER: Evelyn Cannon, SJHM Volunteer

This is Ellen Garboske speaking. I'm a volunteer with the San Jose Historical Museum working on the Oral History Project. Today I'm talking to Theron Fox, a native of San Jose. We'll be talking about growing up in San Jose, newspaper and radio reporting, publishing and the printing field and Mr. Fox's community involvement.

TF = Theron Fox

EG = Ellen Garboske

EG Theron, could you tell us a little bit about your early family background, when your family first came to this area.

TF Well I guess I should start off by saying that probably the most important event of my life was I was born. It just happened to fall on May 18, 1905 and the tragedy in my life was that 53 days after I was born my father died. He died as a result of a fall from a bicycle on a

railroad and injured his back. Under today's medical facilities he probably would have been alive but it wasn't possible in 1905. Anyway, to get back to the original family, the original family on my father's side came to California in 1846. Samuel C. Young, who was the Young of the Harlan-Young Party, was my great great grandfather and he arrived in Santa Clara County at Mission Santa Clara in December of 1846. Accounts of the Mission at that time tell of several families stranded in the Mission barn and the only privacy they had was they strung blankets up between the different families and the roof was in such bad shape that they had to run a ditch down the middle of the barn to drain off the water. At that time there was a death in the family of George Young, who was about two months old, I forget the exact date, but he was about two months old, he was less than two months old but he was born six days east of Donner, east of the summit, which made him the first white child born in the state of Nevada. But he died from the conditions, lack of medical facilities. As a matter of fact, there was quite a few people died at that time \_\_\_\_\_ winter and nobody knows exactly where they were buried except that the sexton of the Santa Clara City Cemetery told me a few years ago that they were excavating for new graves over a place that was supposed to be unoccupied and they ran across these

unknown graves over there and it's very likely they could have been the graves from that winter at Santa Clara. Of course they could have been buried in the Santa Clara Cemetery because they were all protestants and in those days they were very careful about not burying protestants in Catholic cemeteries. The oldest daughter of Samuel and Nancy Young was Sara Young and she married Arthur Caldwell and their oldest child, not their oldest child, the older brother, but the oldest daughter, was Maggie named after Caldwell's mother and she eventually married. The Caldwells owned a ranch of which \_\_\_\_\_ Gared(?) farms in Saratoga and next door was Jerome Bonaparte Fox and she married her neighbor. I'm missing a point there that when she was born at Mission Santa Clara that meant she was the first, we believe, the first Anglo-American born in Santa Clara County and there's a bronze plaque on her grave at Oak Hill Cemetery stating that she was the first Anglo-American born in Santa Clara County.

EG That was in February of 1847.

TF She was born on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1847.

EG February 22nd right? Yeah.

TF Lincoln's birthday.

EG Oh, okay.

TF My grandma, my other grandmother, was born on Washington's birthday (laughter). No, she was born on Lincoln's birthday 1847. Then she married Jerome Bonaparte Fox and they had four children, three boys and a daughter. One boy was killed in a lumbering accident coming down from the Santa Cruz Mountains. Ira Fox was a premier \_\_\_\_\_, for a time he operated in Saratoga as an undertaker and, as a matter of fact, in Saratoga's First Hundred Years there is a picture of his ad in the newspaper as an undertaker which consisted mostly of embalming and making the wooden blocks for the coffin. Strangely enough, Los Gatos was the site of one of the first embalming schools in the State of California. I think his name was Ward and the Ward Dray Undertaking Parlor came down from that. If you go to the Willow Glen Mortuary, they still have the old certificates on the wall there where they conducted the mortuary school in Los Gatos. There was Theodore who was killed in the accident, there was Ira that lived to the '20's sometime and then my own father, he was the youngest of the family, he died in 1905. Then there was an Aunt Beulah, Beulah Abarr(?), she eventually died in

Pasadena but she is buried in the Fox plot at Oak Hill Cemetery. So that takes care of that. My mother's family, I'm not so distinct of that except that her father was a sailor and he jumped ship in San Francisco and he married his wife -- I can't remember her name, it was some simple name like Sara Miller, one of those old fashioned names, I can't remember it. But she was from Vermont, what she was doing in California I don't know, but anyway they were married and it was a very unsuccessful marriage and she finally divorced him and the divorce in the \_\_\_\_\_ was very unusual. When she got the divorce she didn't even ask for alimony so she was trying to raise a family; she got all the children but they were all pretty young. My grandfather he ran large ranches up in Walnut Grove; he was like a ranch superintendent, mainly operated with Chinese. I can just barely remember visiting up there, I can't remember him but he lived across the river from Walnut Grove and the Post Office was across the river and I can just barely remember they put me in the boat while they rowed across the river to get his mail. That must have been previous some time to 1910, that's probably my earliest memory and it's not a very distinct one but I can remember going across the river in the boat because of course it was the only time I was ever in a boat.

EG           What was your mother's name?

TF           My mother's name was Lona May Holden and she married Fox and of course my father died and five years later she married Anton Pernard.   Pernard was quite a person himself, he only had a third grade education but he was a terrific engineer and mechanic and during his life he had six or seven patents and in his retired years he made his living by making Queen Bee Shipping Cages, which he invented the form of, and I often wanted to check with the University of California at Davis to see what the status of the cage is now because I haven't any idea what happened to it after that but he used to make about 300,000 of them a year, was an average year's production. And he started off to be a carpenter, I guess you'd call it, although his last job in that field was foreman of the Sash and Door Department at the old Santa Clara Valley Lumber Company, which was located at Sunol and San Carlos Streets.   But during all this time he was interested in the cornet and we lived on the corner of the creek at Los Gatos and what is now Auzerais, in those days it was Sansevain and then later called San Salvador and now called Auzerais.   Every time the street crossed a creek that served the Guadalupe or the Los Gatos they changed the name.   He eventually took to music as a fulltime -- well not a fulltime because musicians didn't

work very long, they worked I think four hours a night in a theater and then \_\_\_\_\_. But he devoted most of his life from the time I knew him as a musician and he used to play in parades and theaters. He played at the Jose Theater when it had its doors open for 22 years until the owner died and then he played for the Plantages and the old Victory Theater and of course in between times they'd leave the theater to play in dance bands and also parades. And of course another big source of income for musicians was the old time Italians and the Chinese always had bands at their funerals and so he used to play in those too. The Italians would start from the Italian Hall on North Market Street about where the Community Bank is now and walk up to the St. Joseph's Church where they'd have a mass and then they'd walk out, then that was the end of the Italian parade. But the Chinese, I don't know where they started, but they'd end at the city limits, which at that time was at Alma Street, and then they'd go further. And the Chinese Cemetery at that time was to the West of the Oak Hill Cemetery. As a matter of fact, the site is still there and there are probably still Chinese still buried there, but the theory in those days was they were buried there temporarily and their remains would eventually be shipped back to China for final burial but in most cases that never materialized because the Chinese were not that prosperous in those

days to do that but that was the idea anyway. Where do we go now?

EG           Okay, talking about your father.

TF           Oh, my father. My father was very much interested in automobiles -- not auto building, machinery -- and eventually up to the time of his death, he died when he was 27, he was strictly a laborer. As a matter of fact, when he and my mother were married they spent their honeymoon working for the Wool Cannery and camped in a tent in a prune orchard near the cannery (laughter). But my father had very little education also but he was very much interested in automobiles, of course he died just as automobiles were coming into existence and I'm sure that if he had lived he'd have been an auto mechanic or in that business in some form because he was quite adaptable actually. Only engines at that time were on boats and he used to work at times for a fellow who had a motor boat at Alviso and he'd go out and run the motor while the rest of the outfit cruised around. My mother upon the death of my father had a very bad time for the early part of her widowed life. The only work open to women of that time was housekeeping or taking care of elderly indigent people and so she'd get these jobs taking care of somebody who was dying, they'd die and



she'd be out of a job again and she told me that many a time she left the house of her former employer with me in one arm and her suitcase in the other which contained all she owned and didn't know for sure where she was gonna spend the night. But she did have enough friends, I don't think she ever slept out in the open, she did have enough friends that would take her in for a few days and of course they did that in those days and probably moreso than now. Anyway, there was a Pernard family, her sister had married a Pernard in Morgan Hill and he had a cousin who lived in San Jose on Auzerais Avenue, at then 810 Auzerais Avenue, and his mother was sick and he had a crippled brother that needed taking care of so my mother went to keep house for them and do the cooking. The mother soon died and the uncle, Pernard's brother Steve, he lived for quite a number of years, I don't know just what year he died but probably he lived till the '20's some time. So anyway, my mother went there to keep house for them and after about -- I don't know when she went there -- but anyway in 1910 she married Pernard and it was a very successful and happy marriage. She died very unexpectedly when she was 63 years old from diverticulitis which has always concerned me a little bit because I have diverticulosis. Diverticulosis is diverticulitis before it becomes infected, but I have all the pockmarks in my intestines which I've always been a

little bit concerned about that. Pernard lived to be 86 years old, he died in his sleep a very quiet peaceful death but he was active up to the time of his death. Matter of fact, when they found out he'd passed away we had to be careful going into the back door, the day before he'd painted the door and it was still wet (laughter). We had to go around and go in the front door although the usual entrance was through the back door. Living at that location on Auzerais Avenue I was in the Sunol School District and that's where I went to school. Now as a youngster I had what they called "billious attacks", I don't know what they'd call them today but i was always vomiting, I couldn't hold anything on my stomach. I was very frail so I didn't start school until I was seven years old and even then in the first grade I was out of school for one stretch for six weeks but in spite of that i managed to get promoted to the second grade. Then in the second grade they jumped me into the third grade so in spite of my late start I graduated from grammar school when I was 14 years old in seven years but I made up for that by going to high school. In the meantime, my stepfather was a terrific guy to me, he was actually a perfect father; I can think of nothing but fond memories of him. But one Christmas when I was in the fifth grade, he gave me a bicycle for Christmas and I was the only kid in the fifth grade who had a bicycle.

And from the bicycle of course that put me on wheels and what I used to love to do, ride all around town and back, Saratoga, all around. And one day I was going by the San Jose News office, which at that time was on Second Street, and I met some kids there that I knew and they were carrying newspaper routes so I went up and applied for a newspaper route and I got one. A fellow named Ford, Hyacinth Ford was his name (chuckle) he hired me and in my early life he was one of my best friends and counselors. He was very good with kids, he hired a lot of kids and he was very good. But anyway, I came home and told my mother I had this job and she told me later that she laid awake all night wondering if she should let me take this job and be riding all around town but anyway she let me and from that time until about 1926 -- let's see, I must have been about 14, that must have been about 1916 or '17 I got the bicycle -- and from that time until about 1927 I was always working for the San Jose News in some capacity or another. When I graduated from high school -- getting back to my high school career -- I was so active in working for the News that I never did any homework or attended the classes much. Anyway, it took me six years to graduate from high school but I had the record of never turning in a piece of homework in the whole time (laughter). Going to high school I had one teacher that was particularly after me to turn in

homework and the principal of high school, Raymond Leland -- Leland High School is named after him -- he was a terrific guy and since I was working for the paper and writing sports news I was pretty well known to the principal and the faculty. And she'd always give me a note and send me down to Leland for not turning in homework and I remember one time I walked in he put his hands on his hips he said, "What, you here again?" (laughter) so we'd sit down and talk sports for a little bit and he said, "Listen, you are the only \_\_\_\_\_". Turn in some homework once in a while."

(laughter). Unfortunately, I had her for both Latin and Algebra. I wasn't bad at algebra but I didn't do homework. Matter of fact, later on at college math was my minor and when I got away from Dibble -- I can't remember the teacher's name now, she was supposed to be a real dazzle, I got along with her swell and she didn't ask me to turn in homework (chuckle). But I took Algebra 1 and 2 from Dibble and 3 and 4 from this other teacher and I also took Trigonometry but I always passed math, but if I didn't have to hand in homework. But I could get enough in the class that I could pass the math examinations without turning in homework. But Latin, I can never understand why anybody took Latin anyway; I resented having to take it. I also took French which I passed with a C, probably with a C average. I had A's

and B's in math but I don't think I ever had an A and B in any other course in high school. It was interesting because I was out of high school for five years and I had a chance to get to -- first I went to the News, I was a reporter on the News and in those days they fired people for no reason at all and I was fired or laid off, any way you want to put it, because the Editor, Jack Wright, told me that Bagley had a friend whose son wanted my job. He was a classmate of mine at high school so they fired me to give the job to Stan Woller. Well Stan was a terrific writer and a good newspaperman there's no question about that. I discovered early in life I'm not a good writer, I can edit and I did pretty well in editing in various capacities but I was not a good writer. In school I wasn't very active in school activities as such but I wrote for the newspaper on a space basis and covered sports for the last about three years of my six years in high school and I made pretty good money going to school at that time but I didn't have any social activities insofar as parties or anything like that. Matter of fact, I didn't take my first girl out until -- except that my first date I had in high school was the Senior Ball and that was when I was over 20 years old before I ever took a girl out. So I didn't cover that social thing like a lot of young people do; I made up for it in college. I went to school with some very interesting

people, one of which is still alive and still active is Ernie Renzel, he was a classmate of mine. Of course my association with him is very classic; when we wanted to buy the Bohnett Collection of Antiques for the Museum, Dutch Hamman, the City Manager, said, "Well we could buy it for a quarter of a million dollars all right but the City could only put up \$50,000 a year." He said, "Can you get somebody that'll buy it? Or can you arrange at a bank to buy it? and the City'll pay \$50,000 a year until the money's paid off." So the only person I knew with \$50,000 to a quarter of a million dollars -- 'cause I had no credit with a bank, I used to borrow a hundred dollars but that was my credit limit with the bank -- so I went to see Ernie and I hadn't seen him for quite some time and he had a beautiful antique office, rolltop desk and it was really done beautifully. He ran a wholesale grocery business. And so we no sooner sat down and \_\_\_\_\_ he says, "Well what do you want?" (Laughter) "How come you came." He knew I wanted something and so I told him about this Bohnett Collection and the City would buy it but they could only afford to pay \$50,000 a year. They couldn't put up a quarter of a million and I had to get somebody to buy it and hold it so the City could buy it. And he asked me he said, "Is it worth a quarter of a million dollars?" I said, well in my estimation it was, I'd inventory it, I said, the old

inventory that they had the other day and I was wondering if he would be willing to do that 'cause he had previously bought the airport property and had a similar situation there. But he leaned back in his chair, I remember he looked at the ceiling, he said, "Okay." So I borrowed a quarter of a million dollars in less than one minute. (Laughter) But anyway, that's the type of guy he was. Since that time we've been a little bit closer, he's one of the two people that stop to see me occasionally. He can't hear very well, he goes to some hearing place around here and every time he goes over there he drops in and visits with me for a little bit. So I don't think of any other people that actually became very prominent, I have a lot of good friends but they're just every day good middle class people.

EG        Now you went to grammar school at the Sunol School. What was it like? Was it big? Were there a lot of different classrooms? Or did you have classes together?

TF        Sunol School was the toughest school in San Jose. Of course Sunol was not in the city limits, it was basically a country school.

EG        Where was it located?

TF

On Sunol Street over in between Park and San Carlos. And it was organized originally as part of the Hester District and was first known as South Hester and then later on it became a separate district. But that was absolutely the toughest school in town. Matter of fact, the streets in back of it were Dupont and Mackelroy, I think, something like that, and that section of the city came down two sides, it went down San Carlos and went down Park Avenue but this projection of the county was in there and that Mackelroy and Dupont, that's it, that was known as the Little Tijuana Section. \_\_\_\_\_ gambling, prostitution, bootlegging. Oh, bootlegging was rampant later on, not in particular at that time 'cause Prohibition didn't come in till about 1918 but when it did come in that was the Lo Curtas(?), a lot of them were bootleggers. I always like to tell the story, we had two girls in the class who were prostituting when they were in grammar school, and oh about probably 30 years ago now I asked him, I said, "Where are your sisters, Lizzie and Katie?" He said, "Oh they're living down in Carmel." (Laughter) So I guess they saved their money but they were not bad looking young women but that was their life. They never did marry, either one of them, but that was their life like I say. Everybody knew it, I mean there was no secret about it. We had one guy, Steven Yost, he was in grammar school with me. The bootleggers used to



have an annual picnic up in Long Barn Saratoga, not only would the bootleggers go but different law enforcement officers and citizens of the town would go up to the Bootleggers picnic and there was a constable, I can't remember, he was from Saratoga, but he got out of hand, he was flourishing his gun around and shot off a few shots and Steven Yost also had a gun and he shot and killed him and he got away with it. But he was a bootlegger and I remember the last time I saw him there was a bar on the corner of Lightston Alley and Post Street and I'd see him in there once in a while, I'd walk by and go in and say hello, just pass the time. I never had a drink there, I don't drink, very seldom, when I say very seldom I mean Christmas, New Year's Eve about it. But I used to get me a soft drink and sit there and talk. He was all right but anybody who can shoot a constable at a bootleggers picnic is my idea of a real tough guy (laughter). But to offset that, that school produced Judge Jack Dempsey who was a Justice of the Peace in San Jose; it produced Ferdinand Pala who was City Attorney for many years; it produced Ray Blackmore who was Chief of Police for many many years in San Jose, thirty years I guess at least in San Jose; and one of the girls, I can't remember her name, she was a beautiful blonde and she married the Treasurer of Food Machinery Corporation at that time, I can't remember his name either. So we

had the good and the bad, we had some school teachers, one girl when her husband died it was said that she inherited a million and a half dollars from him. So we had the good and the bad but, as a matter of fact, there was a Chinese lottery that backed up to the school and at recess at times I'd crawl over the back fence of the school into the Chinese lottery joint and play a lottery ticket and then when I got out of school at night they'd have the drawings. You'd play a lottery ticket for 10 cents and so I was as bad as the next one I guess but it was a tough school. I mean it had its tough side and I was the weakest and youngest kid in the class and there was a girl by the name of Alice Terovich and all the way through school -- in those days they used to rank 'em, you know, alphabetically -- I mean numerically -- by class by your test score, and all the way through grammar school she was number one and I was number two. I tied her once, we were tied, and she had an older brother and every time the report card would come out I could always count on gettin' the raspberry from him for his sister beating me. His sister was a month older than I was but she was the one that inherited a million and a half dollars. She graduated in six, she taught school for a while and her brother Paul Terovich he was the first one of the school to ever graduate from Stanford University. He graduated in Chemistry and six months after he

graduated he got pneumonia and died. A real tragedy, he was a real nice guy in spite of the raspberry he used to give me; too bad that he died so young. But the school as a whole was a no-nonsense school, you got the \_\_\_\_\_ corporal punishment usually on the hand. I got that a couple of times. As I look back, it wasn't such a serious offense but I got licked anyway but of course I couldn't tell my folks 'cause my mother'd given me another wallop. I don't know. Oh yeah, I think one of the differences in education in those days, we had one widow who was a teacher and I had her the third, sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Every time I got promoted she got promoted. But then in addition to that we had four spinsters who were teachers and they were there for years and those were dedicated teachers. That's all they thought about was teaching and the school. I can remember we had one teacher, Miss Prindle, Harriet Prindle, every graduation she'd break down and cry with tears at all these kids leaving the school. But they only taught school, they didn't have to worry about lunch programs or health programs or -- what are those? -- transportation, they didn't have to worry about all that stuff. I think one of the biggest problems today is they have all these things that really aren't education but somewhere the schools have taken on the responsibility and that has a benefit for the

administrator, gets more money, he's administrating more people and a bigger budget and all that. I don't know, I think if they'd put health and transportation back where it belongs our education system would be a lot better. Course I think the school teachers today are a different breed entirely. They want to live like most married women, they want to have their job and homelife too and to be a good school teacher it takes a lot of time and thought. Our school teachers they were teachers and that was their life.

EG Did you have big classes?

TF Well the classes from the first to the sixth grade were I'd say 25 to 30 students. In those days if you didn't pass you didn't get promoted, you'd repeat and so by the time you got to the seventh grade two things happened. The dumb kids, or the retarded kids I guess is a more charitable way of saying it, they would quit school because they would be 16. Then the girls would get married because when they were married they didn't have to go to school although otherwise if you quit 'cause of a job you had to go to school four hours a week in those days. That's why they had a continuation school. So the result was that the seventh and eighth grade were in one room and they had the teacher and the principal change

off. The principal was primarily the eighth grade teacher and Mrs. Stewart, the widow, she was primary to seventh grade teacher. But they were good teachers, every teacher I had in grammar school was excellent. When I got in high school they had some good and bad, I had good teachers in high school but I had some pretty bad ones too. I think it's an interesting story about a fellow by the name of Curley, he was a music teacher. I knew him in his better days when he was a terrific, he was a good guy, I think; I never took music but I think he was a good teacher and a good fellow. But he had problems, he went off his rocker and the School Department tried to fire him and he sued to get his job back and so he finally won his suit and got two years back pay and reinstated his job and 90 days after he won the suit he died in a mental hospital. The guy was crazy and yet they couldn't fire him and I think that's one of the problems we have today. I think tenure is terrible. You can have a terrific teacher today at 25 and by the time the teacher is 45 they're not good. And just the idea that if they teach three years you got to hire them for life I think is one reason for the decay in education because in those days they had no tenure. You taught or you got fired. Course the problem was that in some districts, particularly in the cities, your teachers are expected to contribute to the political funds of whoever

was in charge of the city at that time which of course is wrong. But I think this tenure is for the bunk myself and it goes to the fact they expect teachers to be in too many fields. But teachers are four-flushers too. I lived across the street from a teacher, it was a man, and every afternoon he'd come home from school about four or four-thirty with his briefcase, he'd walk in the house and put his briefcase by the door and do whatever he'd want to do. The next morning when he left for school, he'd pick up the briefcase and go to school. And I asked his daughter one time -- he had a daughter 20 years old or so -- I said, "Does your father ever do any homework out of that briefcase?" because I'd been over to the house and the briefcase would be sitting there. I said, "Does your father ever do any work out of that briefcase?" She said, "Never, he never touches it when he brings it home." Yet every afternoon he'd bring that briefcase home with the supposition that people'd think he was taking work home. And I think there's a lot of that. When teachers say how much work they do at home I am inclined to be very very doubtful. I think they probably do right at the end of the semester, right at the end of the school year, but insofar as the day-to-day operation I don't think they do that.

End of Side 1, Tape 1.

Beginning of Side 2, Tape 1.

TF

Well anyway, I told about being fired at the News where I was getting the magnificent salary of \$15.00 a week for 48 hours and of course I was pretty broken up over it because I loved the work, I loved the people I was working with, so I went over and applied to the Mercury and a week later I went to work for the Mercury for \$25.00 a week, a \$10.00 increase in salary (chuckle). But 'course the problem over there was, which inhibited my social life, I worked from two in the afternoon till eleven at night. An unfortunate thing, it was a 48 hour job but I never knew which day I was gonna have off until the night before so for instance I couldn't ask a girl to go out a week from Wednesday because i didn't know if I was gonna have to work that night. But anyway I was a reporter for them and then I went to the Sports Department on the sports center and then I was over at the state college, as we called it then, and they had a print shop. Basically I'd always liked printing, always wanted to be a printer; matter of fact one of my disappointments was the fact I could never get -- in those days the union governed the apprenticeships and so forth -- I could never get my apprenticeship to be a printer. I would have preferred to have been a printer to a reporter. And so anyway I was over at the college

and i was getting kinda restless anyway, I was 25 years old and I was gettin' kind of restless, and this print shop over there they had a fellow running it who ran the shop and went to school and so he said well he was leaving on the first of April and I asked Ben Spalling, who was in charge of the operation there, "Gee" I says, "Could I get that job?" He said, "Sure, if you want the job you can have it." So I left the newspaper business to run the print shop at the state college and worked my way through college after taking six years to go through grammar school, not grammar, high school and I took my transcript over to the -- they had to let me in because the junior college there at that time and I was over 21 years old and had been out of school for a year so they had to take me -- and I took my transcript over and another woman by the name of Mrs. Scott, she was Assistant Dean of the lower division, she looked at my transcript, she says, "There's no use you coming to college you can't do the work." Well I already had the job but I had to go to school so I says, "Well, I'm gonna take a crack at it anyway." (Chuckle) And so the result was that out of the 14 units -- they wouldn't let me take a heavy course, 15 units was the normal course, 15 or 16, but they'd only let me take 14 units -- but out of the 14 units I got 10 units of A and I graduated from college in three years (laughter).



EG           What kind of courses did you take?

TF           Well of course at that time you could only take education so I have a teaching certificate. I applied a couple times but I graduated in '33, which was the depth of the Depression, and you couldn't buy, beg, borrow or steal a job in the teaching field and I don't think I'd a made a good teacher. I went back years later and taught a course at San Jose State in the Journalism Department and I finished the course all right but when I finished the course I said, "That's it, I'm never going to go to school again as a teacher or a student or no. My education is through." (Chuckle) It was fun in a way, particularly as years later as you met your students and they kind of appreciated me, I felt like I did a good job and they were very nice but I wouldn't have been a good teacher I'm sure.

EG           What kind of printing did they do in your printing shop out there?

TF           Well, they did printing for the college and also I could do printing for any school organization, I couldn't go in the city and get printing but I could, like fraternities would have dances, I'd print a few dance bids, and if the student store needed stationery I'd print stationery for

the college, and the library had a system where they had little 3 x 5 cards and sheets and when you checked out a book they'd fill it in and so at the summer I'd get an order for -- it was printed on different colors of paper, I don't remember why, but it was the same form on different colors of paper -- but they'd want to order a half a million slips printed on two sides. (Chuckle) One of my bosses didn't know anything about printing or anything about it and didn't supervise me really, once I got in there and produced the work there I can never remember being supervised in any manner or form, but they never heard of the person's little 3 x 5 sheets of paper. I used to print 'em four at a time and then they had a system where everything was based on \$.50 an hour, they figured it'd take an hour to run a 3 x 5 and an hour to lock up and everything was on a thing like that book. Gosh, I don't know whether I was good or what but anyway I'd print these things four at a time and I could run 1500 an hour instead of a thousand so I was making \$3.16 an hour when the other people in town were working for two bits an hour and I had to hold back so I didn't make too much money (laughter).

EG Ah. What was the equipment like that you used?

TF Just a 10 x 15 platen press. It was all hand fed and I

used to limit myself to 10,000 pressures and I'd work mostly on Saturdays and Sundays which left my weekdays free. But I made enough I saved money to buy a car and that's when I really discovered girls because of course we had quite a bunch of 'em over there and I had money. I had more money than most kids had at the time, I had a car. Course in those days, in the Depression days, I learned several different talks and so forth. If you asked a girl to walk home with her that was it, you walked home; but if you asked her to walk downtown and said a coke that was it, a \$.05 coke; if you were really flush, of course milkshakes were \$.10 then, you'd say well let's have a milkshake, see, but that was it. A girl in those days would never order more than her escort suggested. And of course things were so bad actually that dates were very economical and mostly just company. Well, they used to have shows at school but school took up most of the social life; they had student dances, basketball, sports games and there again I got into sports. I broadcast the first football game over KCBS, five games in the season 1932. I also had an order of the souvenir football program. So I started several things over there and the funny thing was when it got to be the senior year -- campus-wise I was pretty well known, I'd never held a student body office -- but in the senior year, the graduating year, everybody that should

have been present wasn't present for some reason or they couldn't run, they had to do student teaching, they had to do this or that, so I said, "Well, this is fun, I'll run for senior class graduating president", which at that time was quite a deal, so I ran and I won for that then I gave a talk at graduation and all that but it was really that I just fell into it because everybody that should have been president couldn't run for some reason or other. There was about four guys that couldn't make it. So that was another \_\_\_\_\_ turn of events and after that I was president of the Alumni Association, General Chairman of the Golden Grad Meeting 50 years after graduation but when I could see and could get around I used to be over at the college a good deal but I couldn't go to football games because I'd get so worked up, win or lose I'd get so worked up, I'd come home a nervous wreck so I got to the point where I just didn't go to football games. Matter of fact, when they have them broadcast on the radio now I don't listen to 'em 'cause I get so worked up.

EG           And yet you did broadcast.

TF           I broadcast the first five football games out of San Jose State and before that 'course when I was on the Sports Department of the Mercury I used to officiate football,

I used to referee football and basketball so I knew football terminology and technique pretty good. Course in those days football players and coaches were actually illiterate when it came to football because I belong to what is called The Pacific Coast Officials Association and they used to meet every Monday in San Francisco during football season and to get in you had to take an examination on the rules and pass it and then you went to these meetings and they talked over rules and so forth so it wasn't just a matter of grabbing a whistle and going out and blowing it once in a while. You had a background education and an organization in back of you and the association used to assign games to you and I got up to where I worked one college game and I worked at several junior college games and mostly high schools but you get \$10.00 for working a high school game. But anyway, I forgot what I was leading up to.

EG        You talked a little bit about dating. Let's go back and talk about that. You said you had a car. What kind of a car was it?

TF        About 1925 Chrysler came out with a roadster and it was the classiest car on the road in those days. When I bought mine secondhand about 1931, I paid \$125.00 for it and I drove that car for about seven years till somebody

stole it from me and wrecked it. They wrecked it out on Dry Creek Road. So that made me really a very desirable date (Laughter).

EG And where would you go on these dates?

TF Course I had money by that time, maybe a show or out to a drive-in somewhere, park, and I'd go to Santa Cruz, I could take my girl to \_\_\_\_\_ a track meet in Sacramento, Santa Cruz, a lot of times Santa Cruz. Course my problem there was that I did most of my printing work on Saturday and Sunday but I could arrange that all right, particularly if I was ahead. So then when I graduated I lost the printing job. Speaking of dates, well after I graduated to keep on going to school they put up a counseling course for me where I would counsel freshmen and so I had 50 freshmen and a girl, Grace Heinbach, who was a classmate of mine, she wanted to do the same thing so she had 50 freshmen. Among the 50 freshman was Frances (chuckle) and course I like to tease her once in a while, the first time she saw me she had to have an appointment (laughter). But anyway, we weren't exclusive daters but we saw a good deal of each other all the time she was an upper classman. We dated a while, we didn't go exclusive, but then after she got out of school for a year then we got married, it's 54

years ago.

Now you were talking about transportation. Course when we lived on Auzerais Avenue, we had about two acres of land and my dad, who had previously been a cabinetmaker and a carpenter, he rebuilt the house and we had the finest house in that whole area because he worked four hours at night and he had day times. He didn't used to get up till about nine o'clock in the morning so during the school week I didn't see him till dinner time but he'd do all this work and we had one of the finest houses in the area.

EG Is that house still up?

TF No, Del Monte bought it. When they put the overpass on San Carlos Street, they couldn't have access to the Del Monte Cannery so they bought \_\_\_\_\_ Auzerais Avenue and they bought our place for storage; I don't know \_\_\_\_\_  
----- (inaudible) building or two or not. But there's an elderberry tree out there \_\_\_\_\_  
the limbs came down, it was like a house underneath it, you know. I can remember as a kid playing under it. The elderberry tree is still there, I go by once in a while, but it's rundown now. Course in those days, in the early days, the creek ran the year round, nice cause you'd just

go down and drink out of the creek any time you got thirsty and usually springs coming out of the side of the road. My first memories of the place, I don't know if the first but the early memories, was that we had a hand pump on the back porch, we had to pump our water by hand, and the well was only 15 feet deep and it was part of my job to keep a bucket of water in the pantry all the time. Any time I saw it got down to -- I think it was two buckets I had -- but any time one was empty it was my job to go out and fill the bucket with water. And then that well went dry so then my dad -- I call my stepfather my dad, my father is my father (laughter) -- but he built a two-story tank house and he put a well down 50 feet, that was going to last forever a 50-foot well. And when that earthquake came in 1911 -- well it was a three-story tank house, the idea was that we were gonna sleep out there in the summertime, and then the 5,000 tank gallons of water was above that -- but when that earthquake came in I guess it was March 1911 my mother and myself and my dad were on the second floor of this tank house when that big earthquake hit and the water splashed out of the tank on both sides and my mother started to scream and \_\_\_\_\_ and I started to scream, that brought her to her senses and then she calmed down. But my dad he just stood by the ladder and did nothing. He said well he knew the tank was good, he built it (chuckle), he



wasn't worried about that. So then we had the 50-foot well and that went for a long time and then the water got down below 50 feet so we hooked on to the city sump hole at San Jose Water Company. We used to still run the water in the tank cause we had better pressure, with water running into the tank slowly and it had an automatic stop on it somewhere. But we had terrific pressure of water for the garden or the house or anything like that, something that most people don't have which we don't have today. You could turn the water on at our house, boy it came out of that.

Electricity was another interesting thing. Electricity was just coming in because I can remember an uncle on Delmas Avenue, he had a fixture in his house where one tube went up, that was a gas light, another one come down where you could plug in an electric bulb so you could use either electricity or gas. Course it was 110 Volts like we use now. But the house is still there, I often wonder if those old fixtures are still there. I'd like to get 'em for the Museum because I can remember. I think gas was cheaper so they'd use the gas in preference to the electricity except on certain occasions they'd use the electricity. But anyway, we were too far from the power lines to get electricity but the Interurban Railroad ran down Bird Avenue and that was four blocks away but that

was 500 Volts instead of 110 so anyway Dad made a deal with 'em to wire the electricity to our place. I don't know if that took a special pole or not, but I remember the deal was that they wired it and he particularly wanted it because being he did so much carpentry work and he wanted cutoff saws and stuff like that but he had to have a five horsepower motor and he ran it from an overhead shaft and he'd hook it up to different -- you see he had a long shop and he had all kinds of contraptions that he hooked up to that. The point was that in the house we had to burn five lights at a time and if one light went off all the lights on the circuit went off and so we had four different circuits. And so people used to come over and think we were crazy, here we had a light on the porch and nobody was on the porch (chuckle). The hookup to that time was that we had four lights in the dining room -- not the dining -- living room and one in the porch light so all the rooms were on at once. Also at that time at the start, the outgo of plumbing was outside and so the house was built in such a way, and there was a closet here and a closet here, these are bedrooms so dad knocked out the center room here and put a bathroom in there and really we called it the patent toilet in those days, didn't say bath or toilet but patent toilet, and so he knocked out this hallway so that the two closets made the bathroom and

neighbors used to come around at the beginning, came around to look at the bathtub and flush the toilet and (chuckle) all that. He had one of the modern ones; originally toilets had a big container above the toilet with a pull chain but the idea of that was to add more pressure for flushing. But then they discovered that they didn't have to do that so we had one of the very first ones where you just pushed a button like the modern day toilets. But I can remember the neighbors coming from a block around to look at our toilet, our patent toilet. But anyway, they had that electricity as long as they lived in the house till about 1943 when the cannery bought it. There was four people in town that had it, the Twohy Building, the Bonds Canning Company and Navlet had a nursery on Prevost Street out beyond Auzerais there and ourselves, we were the last four people to have that service. Well Bonds is gone, Navlet's is gone, we're gone, I wonder if the Twohy Building still has that 500 Volt thing to run their elevators. I've often wondered about that. Of course when the railroads were discontinued in 1933 they had to maintain that service and I don't know how many miles of wire just to give us power but by that time they had us on a meter about \$18.00 a year, dollar and a half a month. So that was the way that worked out.

Getting back to transportation, course bicycles were very popular. Like my Dad, when he used to go to the theater he rode his bicycle, which was about a mile, a little over a mile. We used to say a mile from our place to the Eagle Brewery, which was where the Sainte Claire Hotel is, we used to say that was a mile, and then the Jose Theater was a little bit further. But he used to ride his bicycle winter and summer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Well later on the \_\_\_\_\_ was replaced by the \_\_\_\_\_ which was a longer \_\_\_\_\_. I don't what the point was. But he also played the cornet in parades; he played trumpet in the theater and played cornet in parades. When automobiles first started coming in, you could always hear 'em coming. Course everything was dirt roads and they'd bounce along and you could hear 'em coming so I can remember as soon as we'd hear an automobile coming we'd all run out in front to watch the automobile go by and later on the same thing happened to airplanes. You'd hear an airplane go over, you'd all dash out to see the airplane go over. And I had an uncle who lived in Wyoming and he came out to visit us and we were having dinner in the living room, I can remember very clearly, and an airplane went over and somebody happened to mention there's an airplane, gee, he dashed out of our house, he'd never seen an airplane (laughter). It was hard for people to realize that it's

things you accept as common today that were just very unusual in those days. Firstly, I've never taken to airplanes and I've never been up in a small plane; I've always felt like kissing the earth when I got off a big transport plane but I don't feel at ease at all.

EG       What about you? You said you had a bicycle at a reasonably young age but did you ever get on the trolley cars and go any place?

TF       Oh yeah because the trolleys were a nickel. Well we used to go to Alum Rock, course Alum Rock was a favorite weekend spot and all the school picnics and things like that. You asked me if I went to church, I said no but I did go to Sunday School for a while. The Lutheran Church at that time was on Delmas Avenue. It's a Mexican Church of some kind now, the building's still there. I did go there. I remember we had Sunday School picnics out there on that but the \_\_\_\_\_ never really took \_\_\_\_\_. I'm not anti-religious but I'm just unreligious. Of course we'd go to Palo Alto for a dime and those big red cars used to go 60 miles an hour and they'd go out Stevens Creek Road to Monte Vista and then turn over towards Palo Alto and go through Mayfield. Palo Alto wasn't a very big town in those days, Mayfield was a big town but eventually Palo Alto took over Mayfield. But

we'd go to Saratoga. There used to be a loop from out San Carlos to \_\_\_\_\_ Saratoga to Los Gatos and back to Campbell if you knew the way. But those big cars were really something. It's funny, they eliminated the transportation entirely because nobody would ride it and now they're trying to promote it and say that that's the way to go. It might be the way to go but of course the trouble was those railroad cars used to go down the frontage of the orchards and every once in a while some farmer would go out and not hear the streetcar coming and get hit and killed. Matter of fact, the first death in San Jose was Paul Masson's daughter and her husband, the name was LeClerc, L-e-C-l-e-r-c I think or something like that, at the corner of I guess it's Almaden, although it had a different street name, Almaden and Park Avenue -- the first auto streetcar death in San Jose. But I remember the daughter was in high school with me. Frances Kohler(?) bought some historical deal and I told Frances, I said, "I went to grammar school with her, she was a beautiful girl", not grammar school high school, and she didn't remember me but that's par for the course. I remember Robert Kohrmuller's(?) famous car accident back in the '20s and he said that in his lifetime he had turned to watch thousands of beautiful girls walk by and he said never once had he seen one of the beautiful girls turn to look at him (chuckle) so that was my situation

(chuckle). I remember her but she didn't remember me.

EG Now you said that a couple were killed.

TF LeClerc.

EG LeClerc. Now how were they killed?

TF They were in an automobile and they hit a streetcar or the streetcar hit them, I don't know exactly which, and that was the first collision between an automobile and a streetcar. Course before that it used to be the streetcars hit teams and horses and things like that.

EG Did you ride it when they still had horse-drawn trolleys?

TF No, they were all electric when I -- I think the only place they had horse-drawn trolleys was on the Alameda. That right? I never rode 'em, I'm not quite that old.

EG No no, and then when you were real young you lived close enough to town that your parents didn't need a horse and buggy or whatever.

TF Oh no, we weren't that close to town but if you still wanted to buy groceries and stuff you still had to go and

carry 'em back. Like business today you couldn't carry your groceries very far. Course they had little corner groceries but the big grocery store in town at that time was Black's Package Company and it ran about where the Fairmont is run from First to Market Street and I remember my mother used to try to do most of her shopping once a week at the Black's Package Company. But in those days we had a cow, we had eggs, chickens, and we raised our own vegetables. Matter of fact, during the Depression when my dad still had his \_\_\_\_\_ job we lived off the garden in the yard; there were certain things you had to buy but we did most of the eating out of the yard, chickens, eggs, vegetables, milk. But nowadays they talk about a depression, not depression, but take farmers, the farmers today don't want to raise chickens or a cow or a garden. You go to the Valley and you won't find a chicken or a garden in a whole 20 acre fig orchard. They don't want to be bothered with the details of that, they have their cars and go to town and buy their groceries like everybody else. Well that's one reason why the farmers haven't \_\_\_\_\_ is because when a farmer's gonna have so many bad years, every fifth year or somethin' is gonna be not a good year when they have no cushion.

Newspaper work is more glamorous to the public than it is



to the people working at it. In my own case, there was so much inside work to be done that I never looked upon it as a glamour job particularly except it had one thing that you got to meet and know all the public officials, locally that was, and generally speaking most of the town knew you and you had a ready acceptance in different places. I remember in 1928 I had what we called a graphlex camera, which was a newspaper-type camera used at that time and 1928 was the year that Hoover was nominated for President and so the Mercury's lead cameraman had to go to -- we only had one -- and he was sent to cover the Hoover thing up there where they notified him he was nominated. But that was at the same time as the Check Liddy trial in San Jose and I had a camera which I used to take sports pictures with and so they assigned me to go out and cover the Check Liddy trial because the jury was gonna go out to what is now Hawaiian Gardens, or Italian Gardens, and so I went out there and took pictures of the jury wandering around in the deal. And when I used to work I always carried a camera with me and many times I've taken automobile wrecks and sold 'em to a paper. I can remember when I bought my Speed Graphic, which was an improvement on the Graphlex. The first trip I was going to Fresno, I was going down by Gilroy and ran into this train that ran into a car and killed two people; later I found out there

was three dead and I didn't even see the third corpse. But anyway, knowing the business I went down to Gilroy and mailed the film back to the paper and it was on the front page of the Mercury the next day (chuckle). But it was interesting but really it wasn't that glamorous.

EG           What was the Check Liddy trial? What kind of a case was that?

TF           Check Liddy he was an old time San Josean and he had a bootlegging joint out at what is now known as the Italian Gardens and there was a fight out there and a guy was killed. It was never too clear, apparently this young fella and a couple others were going from bootleg joint to bootleg joint and kind of raising a disturbance, had been kicked out of a couple others before they got there. Anyway, there was a fight and this kid was killed and they charged Check Liddy with killing him. I don't know whether he got a short-term sentence or whether he was pardoned after being in prison for a year or so. It was very unfortunate because he had a lovely family. Course he was a roust-about from the beginning but his family suffered a great deal, his wife and his daughter, and it was too bad but that was one of the big murder trials of the time. Another thing, it always gave me an entre' into the newspaper business, matter of fact during the

war, War II that is -- course I also remember War I but I was working for the \_\_\_\_\_ newspaper then -- but in War II I went back and I worked part-time in the Editorial Department because they were short of help. As a matter of fact, later on they offered me the job as night editor of the Mercury and I came home -- we had a different table then but in this position -- and my two young daughters were sittin' both sides, Frances always sat where you did, and the situation was I gotta take this night job working at that time from five till two in the morning and I decided against it on account of the kids. I wanted to be with the children but financially it would have been a better deal if I had gone with 'em but money isn't everything. I don't actually regret it but in a way I would have eventually gotten up, I believe, up to a pretty high position on the editorial staff but that's the way it goes. But insofar as big stories are concerned, course I used to cover big games, I used to go South for the Rose Bowl and USC and Cal games down south. But it was all in a day's work, we didn't look on all of it as being anything exceptional. Nowadays it seems like the reporters and broadcasting, they do more bragging about themselves than they do about the teams they're covering. (Laughter by EG)

(End of Tape 1, Side 2.)

(Beginning of Tape 2, Side 1.)

(Transcriber's Note: Beginning of following introduction is cut off.)

EG            25, 1992, my name is Ellen Garboske and I am interviewing Theron Fox. This is Tape 2.

Theron, you were a reporter, or sports reporter, with the San Jose News and then the Mercury Herald for a number of years in the 1920s and '30s. Could you tell us just a little more about the type of people you worked with and some of the things that went on.

TF            Well the newspapers in those days were quite interesting organizations. They were very small organizations, they didn't have the large staff they have today and of course there was no such thing as a working hour, you worked the job, which would start with the news at seven in the morning till you got through at night six days a week and the starting pay was usually \$15.00 and usually you didn't get much above that on the News. But it was interesting work and the people were interesting. Jack Wright was the City Editor of the News at that time and he was pretty efficient; when the papers were combined with the Mercury, he retained his job as the City Editor

of the afternoon edition and actually did most of the hiring for the paper at that time. But the Number Two man in the Editorial Department at that time was George McMurray. George was a writer, he was a good writer; he'd written a couple of books, I don't remember the names of 'em now, but he had been born in India, his father was a missionary and he was born in India so his books were \_\_\_\_\_ to India. And then we had a police reporter, George Millard, and Millard was a real character; he should have been a policeman, he was a policeman at heart, carried a gun and even made arrests at certain times. I remember one time I was in the Police Station and George came in with a drunk, arrested him and had him booked at the City Jail, which was in the City Hall park at that time, and his beef was the bum had asked him for some eating money and George offered to take him in a restaurant to buy him a meal and the drunk started to cuss him for not givin' him the money so George threw him in jail instead. But George was always scared to death of being held up at night. Course he'd been around the Police Department a lot and he'd seen people bein' beaten up and shot and he said, and I have no reason to doubt it, when he walked down the street at night he kept his hand in his coat pocket with his hand on his gun as he walked down the street (chuckle). He very early went blind, he was a pretty heavy drinker so

I don't know whether the blindness was caused from poor liquor or whether it was just a natural ailment such as I have, macular degeneration. It could have been either one or a combination of the two. And then Ruth Reese came to town and for years she was the only newspaper woman in San Jose and she was a good newspaper woman and later on she ran her own independent public relations bureau and ran political campaigns and things like that. She was quite competent. And me I came after that and I was the tail end of the parade and course I'd started writing sports when I was in high school. In those days you got 10 cents a column inch for whatever they printed but in those days also \$5.00 a week was a lot of spending money for a kid to have and that was usually about my average income for the \_\_\_\_\_ until I graduated from high school and I went right into the \$15.00 a week job, which was a lot less money for a lot more work. As I said before, we'd start off to work at seven in the morning until you got through and sometimes that included council meetings at night and you'd have assignments and no such thing as overtime. Then after a while I was let go, fired, by Jack Wright who said that the publisher had a friend that had a son that wanted my job. Well it so happened that his name was Stan Woller and he was a terrific writer. Stan Woller was a real good writer and knew San Jose, he was born here, he had a terrific memory

for details. So although I was brokenhearted at losing my \$15.00 a week job actually I could see where he was probably a more competent personality. Later on it developed that I was more of an editor than a writer. I never felt that I was a good writer. But the funny thing is that a week after losing my \$15.00 a week job with the News I went to work for the Mercury for \$25.00 a week and I was hired by John Brokenshire, who was the City Editor, and I was in general assignments over there and covered just general stories, I had no particular beat. I started as a relief, when the courthouse reporter was on a vacation I'd cover courts for two weeks \_\_\_\_\_, police and like that, but I didn't have a regular assignment over there. But I got along pretty good over there and \_\_\_\_\_ in the Sports Department, they only had a two-man Sports Department, and so I went on as Assistant to the Sports Editor and later he quit and I took his job which I held until I started college. It's interesting to note that in my sports years that some of the people I met but how little you think of 'em at the time because I can remember being in a hotel room at the De Anza with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig and the manager and Gene Venaso, the Sports Editor, and myself and we sat up there for oh two hours just sawing the bull and talking sports and I never even asked 'em for an autograph or a picture or anything else.

That's just par for the course, we didn't look upon that. My other champions I met, I met Jack Dempsey and Primo Carnera, Max Schmelling; I think somewhere around the place I have a picture of Max Schmelling autographed. But on a high note, I got the picture, the autograph is faded, you can't see it but at one time it was autographed. Those were the heavyweight champions, then I met numerous minor champions. Course in those days we had no professional sports except boxing in California. We had the Coast League, which was at San Francisco and Oakland, but you didn't have professional football, you didn't have hockey, you didn't have basketball or football, any of those. There was just mostly school and college sports so in those days, for instance, the big game would sell out before the season started. But now the big game doesn't even sell out and that's because for two reasons: in the first place, the newspapers give all their attention to professional sports plus the fact that all this new population that's come in the San Jose area are eastern people and they don't have any allegiance to California or Santa Clara, San Jose or anybody else. Dick Bear at one time in his column, oh this is several years ago when the population was about a half a million people, he estimated there was less than 10,000 people that were in San Jose before World War I and so us natives are getting to be a scarce breed. In the Mercury



the individuals were not as outstanding as they were at the News, in my estimation. Maybe that was because I didn't have as close contact with 'em. We had one fellow with real enterprise, his name was Herbert Cerwin C-e-r-w-i-n, and he used to have interviews and he later became the Public Relations Director for Del Monte. And he was a real nice guy because later on I needed some favors of Del Monte and he took very good care of me and I always appreciated it. I was the last guy on the staff at the Mercury and an order came down from the top to lay off somebody, they had to cut the expenses, and so I being the last one on I was told that I was laid off. One of the reporters, his name was Robert Smith, and he used to travel all over the country, he worked for papers all over the country, and when he heard that he said, "I'll go to San Francisco and get another job", he says, "I don't care much for this job anyway." And he said on his day off he went to San Francisco and by gosh he got a job in San Francisco and came back and quit and so I never lost a day at the Mercury (chuckle). So that was quite a thing for a fellow to do but he was single and foot-loose and could run around and do that whereas I was a hometown body and I never did leave San Jose for any time for anything. But newspaper people in those days, course I'm talking now where the population was less than 60,000 people and one high school and everybody went to the one

high school and you got to know practically everybody in town, you just simply knew 'em, knew them or knew of them. And all the merchants on First Street, the only change you saw on First Street in those days was Woolworth's, all the rest were home-owned businesses starting right at the corner the home-owned bank and Hirsch next door and Stratford's shop and Woolworth, and Gallenkamp's was a chain store too but they had a local manager, and a cigar store and a book store. In just that little block they were all home owned. Then you went clear down to San Carlos Street and the leading merchants were all home owned even Hale's, even though Hale's was a very large department store, the Hales were from San Jose and it was a considerable local store although it later branched off to hit Broadway in Los Angeles and I forget what other branches, it became a large thing, and the headquarters were moved from San Jose but San Jose was the original store. And even the banking industry, Giannini was born in San Jose and, although he started his first bank in San Francisco right after the fire, his first branch was the San Jose branch of the Bank of Italy then later changed to the Bank of America. San Jose kind of led the field but the politicians, like the Commie politicians that were re-elected year after year all except the Sheriff, the Sheriff was a continuous battle mostly between Dilheny(?)

and I can't remember the name of the other one but there was two of 'em and they alternated terms for about six years. One would be elected, in the next election the other would be elected and it was a very interesting thing. And of course this was during the bootleg and Depression years and it was hard to say just how much play that had in the elections, whether the bootleggers favored one -- George Lyle was the other Sheriff -- whether one was more lenient than the first one. Of course there were bootlegging joints all over the town, not the town so much as the county. I never knew a bootlegging joint in the city limits but they all were on the fringe all around the town. And this section over here between Park and San Carlos on Dupont and MacElroy Street that was all the bootlegging joints, gambling joints, Chinese lottery, prostitution and that was known as Little Tijuana. Well Little Tijuana backed up to the Sunol School where I went to grammar school and I actually at times jumped over the back fence during recess to play the Chinese lottery ticket and come back because they had the drawings about 2:00 in the afternoon but if you played in the morning by the time I got out of school the drawings would be in so I guess I was in some respects a juvenile delinquent (chuckle). I always loved Chinese lottery and when I go to Reno or Las Vegas today I play keno, that's the only game worth playing.

I don't play slot machines or shoot crap or any of that. I still love keno which is a revision of Chinese lottery. But the politicians were pretty well known and everybody knew 'em and they went on and on. Where are we now?

EG           Okay, you were talking about the newspaper and the fact that you covered a number of different types of stories.

TF           Oh well, course I covered the sports stories. I used to go to Los Angeles for the Stanford/UFC or USC games and Rose Bowl but I also did some camera work. I wasn't an official cameraman but I had in those days what we called a Graphlex where you used to look down on the top of it and it really is a heavyweight contraption. But I did know how to operate the camera but I didn't do my developing. If I went out I took the pictures and the staff cameraman, who was John Meyer, John -- I don't know -- John Rhoades would develop my pictures for me and print 'em up. But when Hoover was nominated for President in 1928, well John Rhoades was assigned to go to cover that but it was at the same time as the famous Chick Liddy trial in which he was accused of killing one of these patrons of the bootlegging joint. And so the jury was going to visit the scene of the crime and so I went out and I covered that; I was a cameraman on that deal. But that was really the only big story that I

covered in that field although I took many many pictures for the paper and later on I graduated to a speed graphic and now of course they use these little pocket cameras. Development of \_\_\_\_\_ has been due to the improvement of film. It used to be you had to have a 4 x 5 negative and you blew it up twice size and it still showed grain but now they got these 35mm films and you can blow 'em up to 11 x 17 and can't see any grain at all so as the film developed then they made the cameras smaller and that is the reason for that so you see these newspaper cameramen around now and they have these little dinky cameras that they slip in their vest pocket, if they wear a vest, or their shirt pocket and that's it and they can fit 35 film on a roll now, or 36 of 'em I guess it is. In those days we had slides, we put in one slide and pull the slide holder out and turn it over and get one on the other side. So in addition to a camera weighing about 10 or 15 pounds you also had to carry all these film holders. And we didn't have flash bulbs in those days either; we had what we called flash guns, it was a deal had a long trough, oh maybe it was about a foot long, and you'd put flash pot on across the foot and it had a handle come down and you tripped the handle and set the flash off. That was all right except there'd be terrible lot of smokin'. I can remember being out on cases where we'd pose somebody for a picture, you'd take

the picture then you got out of the house as fast as you could before the house light because they were always smokin' (chuckle) in the house. But I covered suicides, murders and traffic accidents and courts and so forth but nothing that I would consider of any great importance except my part of the Chick Liddy trial. Chick Liddy, by the way, was found guilty of manslaughter and he was out of jail in a year. Frankly, it boiled down to these three guys that were making the rounds of the bootlegging joints and by the time they got to Chick Liddy's they were in good fighting mood, I guess, and there was a fight and a guy was killed. It was really nobody's fault in a sense of the word. But I think that just about covers all I know about the -- oh, when the papers combined, the News combined with the Mercury Herald, and Jack Wright who had fired me at the News hired me as a relief Night Editor at the Mercury during the war because they were so short of help. So I used to work at the Rosicrucian Press during the day and then I'd go to work an eight hour shift at the Mercury. I did that for 13 weeks cause it was just so much money plus the fact -- so much time -- plus the fact that everything I made at the Mercury was taxable and by the time they took the tax out of it I wasn't making very much so that was one of the two reasons I left the job. But then they later came back, Jack Wright again, and he wanted me to

come back to work as Night Editor full-time and of course by that time the guild had come into existence and the pay was pretty good somewhat. But I can remember sitting at the table here and Frances sat where you are and one daughter here and one daughter here, they were about oh by that time they were about nine and five or something like that, and I thought well gee if I take that night job I'll never see the kids at dinner time so I turned the job down on that basis although if I had taken it financially I would have done a lot better. But I always maintained my contacts with the paper up until the time they moved and I used to run film. I knew a story when I saw it, heard it, or I knew the angles and I'd drop by and tip off certain people if this happened or that happened. See, I was around town as much as they were and so they always treated me very kindly, I had a lot of mileage out of my newspaper work. Matter of fact, next month is Women's History Month, maybe you don't know that (chuckle). Next month is Women's History Month and so they came to interview me on Margaret Jenkins. Margaret Jenkins was the first San Josean to be in the Olympic Games and I was chairman of the committee that raised funds to send her to the trials to qualify. And I kept a file on Margaret Jenkins and actually I was thinking the other day the file is 64 years old and I still have it, people are still coming around and asking for

material out of it. And so they interviewed me on that and it's gonna appear next month some time and while they were here they interviewed Frances for it; she's gonna have one segment too. It'll be in the Wednesday editions of the Extra section of the Mercury. I thought it was quite interesting, here I had this file on Margaret Jenkins for 64 years. And Margaret sent all of her material -- she's alive, she's 89 years old or will be this year -- and she sent all of her material to somebody who's supposed to be writing a book so she didn't happen to have a picture or a clipping or a darn thing left of her stuff so I guess I have the most active file on Margaret Jenkins myself but I thought it was kind of interesting. Somebody was here yesterday and they were looking for material on Vasquez, the bandit, and I happen to have a sample of his handwriting, actual handwriting, on Vasquez (laughter). I don't know how I got it but I've been quite a collector, save stuff, not a collector but I just don't throw things away and I got a terrific junk room. Like this here, I don't know if you noticed all the bags \_\_\_\_\_ all the living room but this week I sold almost \$1500.00 worth of books and papers and pictures and railroad passes and stuff like that (chuckle). Funny thing is a fellow paid me off in hundred dollar bills (laughter), that was quite unusual too. He had an awful wad in his pocket.



EG           Getting back to Margaret Jenkins, that's very interesting to me. I do know her. Who donated funds to help send her?

TF           Well, course we ran the appeal in the paper and we got many contributions of one to five dollars but the three main contributors -- the funny thing is in the 1920's it was the official policy of the school departments that women were not supposed to compete in competitive athletics and so Margaret Jenkins didn't graduate, she was a teacher at the Santa Clara School System, so anyway she was beyond the reach of the school authorities that were opposed to it but the official position over at San Jose State, for instance where they had a director by the name of Maude Lombard, and any girl that competed in sports would not be recommended for a teaching job, that was policy. Anyway, the three major contributors to the campaign was the Superintendent of Schools of Santa Clara who contributed enormously - \$50.00 but he couldn't use his name because he didn't want to oppose the School Department. And the next was the Superintendent of Schools of San Jose who contributed enormously cause he didn't want to oppose his school district. And the third was the Pacific Manufacturing Company, a fellow by the name of Pearce, he contributed \$50.00 so that was \$150.00 of the \$300.00 needed and we raised the \$300.00 all right

but most of it came in in one and five dollar contributions. And so anyway, she went to Newark, New Jersey and she qualified. And it's interesting, when they were having the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984 they were gonna have this big Olympic banquet at San Jose State for all the past Olympians from San Jose State and so I asked the fellow, I said, "Who was the first Olympian?" and I forget who he said, I think he said, "Tommy Smith" and I said, "Well what year was that?" and he said, "Well it was the 1936 Olympics, that was the one held in Germany", and I said, "No" I says, "He wasn't the first one." And the fellow looked at me and he says, "Well who was he?" I says, "It wasn't a he it was a she." (Laughter) "Margaret Jenkins was the first San Jose State person to be in the Olympic Games and she was in two of them, she was in '28 and '32 before a man ever appeared from San Jose." And so they were quite dumbfounded then because she had been lost in the shuffle and they didn't have any records on her at all. And they had this banquet at 1984 and it was a terrific banquet, there was about 400 people there and honored Margaret Jenkins as being the oldest, not the oldest but the first, Olympian and she was in two and very few people get to be in two Olympics but she did it. But anyway, that was a terrific party.

EG            Wonderful. Now okay, when you left the newspaper then you went to the Rosicrucian Press.

TF            No, I went to college.

EG            Oh, excuse me, yeah.

TF            Yeah, I got the job as printer over at the state college.

EG            Right, we talked about that on your first tape.

TF            Yeah.

EG            Okay then.

TF            Then when I graduated from college then I lost my job cause you had to go to school to hold the printing job, it was a student supported thing, and so I lost that job and I didn't do anything for 10 months. Oh I did have one job at a service station owned by Jan Giordini at Vine and San Carlos Street, he'd just opened a new service station, and Hard Hornbuckle, who was a later Sheriff of the County, and Elbert Garvey they worked two eight hour shifts in the service station. So on Sunday I worked a 16 hour shift so they could have a day off. So I don't know how long I held that, I held it for quite

a while but that was my sole source of cash income for quite a while. Of course I was living at home fortunately and I think I went into it before where we owned. We had our own vegetable garden, a cow and chickens so actually food-wise we lived quite well during that time, we certainly were never without food. In that respect I'd like to tell about three people that in my mind I think represent the spirit of the Depression and an old-time San Josean. In San Jose and Santa Clara County we were without an agricultural valley. During the teens my dad owned 12 acres of property where now the Almaden Plaza is, he owned the rear 12 acres and he had this planted in prune trees and some kind of blight hit the prune trees at that time, And my dad knew every tree personally, he knew where every tree was and the characteristics of it and a tree'd die and he'd come home and sit at the table and he'd cry tears over the loss of a tree, not that he'd lose a tree but this was like a member of the family dying. He'd cry tears, I can remember, he'd sob and try to eat dinner and tell about this prune tree and maybe sometimes there'd be a couple of 'em had gone that day. But anyway, he was not the tough nut to be a farmer and so he sold out and later on, of course, part of it became the Almaden Shopping Center. The other person I always remember was Frances' father, my father-in-law.

EG

What's his name?

TF

His name was John Mraz M-r-a-z, it was a Czechoslovakian name. This was before we were married and I was over there one day and he brought out a small basket of cherries and they were the most beautiful bing cherries I ever saw, they were the size of prunes, large, beautiful, absolutely I've never seen any better since. And see I admired them, I said, "Gosh those are the most terrific fruit I've eaten", and he says, "You know", he says, "they cost me three cents a pound to pick 'em and I can only get two cents a pound for 'em." So I asked him, I said, "Well why do you pick 'em?" He said, "They're such beautiful fruit I won't let 'em go to waste." So here he was (chuckle) losing money on every pound of cherries he picked but he just wouldn't let 'em go to waste so he was a real farmer and real dedicated. But those were the type of people that really made this Valley in the beginning, their orchards and farming and then of course they took out all these ugly orchards and built beautiful subdivisions so people are never there anymore. And the other person that I'll never forget was when I graduated from college I didn't have a suit of clothes. Fortunately I had a tuxedo (laughter) which was over from my newspaper days but I didn't have a suit of clothes. So I went to J. S. Williams, who was one of

the leading clothiers in town at that time and whom I just knew slightly -- I really didn't know him, but I went in to him, I said, "Mr. Williams", I said, "I don't have a job, I don't have any money and I'm graduating from college and looking for and hope to get a job, and I need a suit of clothes though I don't have any money." And he looked me in the face and he says, "Young man", he says, "Take whatever you need and pay for it when you can." So needless to say, every stitch of clothes I bought after that I always bought from him. But that was part of the spirit of the Depression, people were helpful, very considerate and people were willing to share and I still think that these people squawking about the depression these days are a bunch of sissies because they rave about 7% unemployment and normal unemployment is considered to be 5% and during the Depression it was 20%. So I don't know but I think of course the problem today is that what we consider necessities are greater; in the first place, nobody has a vegetable garden anymore, even farmers if they raise sheep, for instance, they don't have a vegetable garden, they don't have cows, they don't have chickens. They buy their eggs and they have two cars but they really aren't self-sustaining. But I lost my train of thought.

EG

You were talking about the Depression and how everybody

helped each other.

TF

Yeah, oh I know. But in those days most people didn't have an automobile, a lot of your heating was in wood stoves. I know my mother cooked on a wood stove up until the middle 30's and she was a good cook but gee the way she loved to slave and do that cooking, particularly if they had a big Thanksgiving dinner with a total of 15 people. But people are so specialized today, even the housewives are specialized, they have oh just like clothes washers and dryers. In those days you scrubbed your clothes on a washboard and hung 'em up in the sun to dry. Nowadays you dump them here and pull 'em out and dump 'em there and there's no work involved really. And the people if their washer breaks down they think they're dispossessed of some kind but they're just used to too much and don't understand what it is not to have all that. If people would just understand what a real depression is, they'd be more considerate and more understanding. And I think one of the things now is the fear, the fear that they might lose their job or something. It's too bad that people have cause that can be a terrible thing for people. Next subject.

(End of Side 1, Tape 2.)

(Beginning of Tape 2, Side 2.)

TF

Well finally, after being out of work for 10 months on May 7, 1934 I went to work for the Rosicrucian Press and so went right back to my 48 hours and \$15.00 (chuckle) price range. But while I ran the print shop at the college once in a while I'd run into a job that was too big that I couldn't handle and I used to take it to Rosicrucian Press and have them produce it for me. So one day I was in there, I imagine I was just visiting, I don't recall the exact circumstances, but anyway they asked me if I would want to go to work as a salesman and so I actually grabbed the job at \$15.00 a week and it was 44 hours then. Actually I was very anxious and I took the job and at the time I was \_\_\_\_\_ it might only be temporary but I stayed 37 1/2 years so that was quite a while. But my job there was primary a salesman, producing salesman and so forth, and I was very lucky in the respect that the Rosicrucian Press was one of the foreleaders of the lithograph process. Most printing up to that time was printed from type on presses where you'd have the type that sat on a flat bed and the press would roll the paper across and then it had to roll back blank so the top speed of a press was 1500 or 1800 an hour. But the lithograph press was printed from cylinders and goes round so there's no waste motion, it just keeps



going, so instead of say 1800 an hour it'd get up to 5 or 6000 an hour. And the Rosicrucian Press was a pioneer in that and when I started over there they were the only company between San Francisco and Los Angeles that had the process so the result was I was able to spread out and I used to go as far south as Santa Barbara and Fresno and Bakersfield and all that on \$15.00 a week but I did get expenses. But I developed a pretty good following and I also did a lot in yearbook publishing. In 1941 I published the '41 yearbooks and that was a year before the war. The next year we cancelled all yearbook contracts. During my work at yearbook publishing, I devised several different systems to facilitate the production and my grandson, he went to school -- I'll get back a little bit. And my system was copying at that time, I'm talking now about the late '30s and '40s, my system was copied by other companies over the country and I got quite a kick out of it that my grandson graduated from the American School at Bangkok and he was on the yearbook staff over at Bangkok and I described the major form and the different margin erases and he said, "Yeah, that's exactly what we use." So here it is 50 years later and they're still using basically the same type of form that I devised back in the 1930s and '40s, but I get quite a kick out of that. Now the reason we had to eliminate the yearbooks is that paper was put on a strict

allotment and we were allowed so much paper and of course we had a pretty good back allotment because of the yearbooks but the trouble is you had people like Food Machinery and then the war effort people that beat us to paper so we had to cancel the yearbooks so we could use the paper on the war effort enterprises. So the thing is that after the war was over we never really did get back in the yearbook business but there was enough business locally that we just didn't do it. And the trouble with the yearbook business it was so seasonal, you'd work your head off for about two months and then there'd be a drop-off and you wouldn't get going again till the next year. The name about the Rosicrucian Press association with the Rosicrucian Order. The Rosicrucian Order came to San Jose about 1927 and moved their national headquarters here. I say national, that included the American and Spanish America headquarters to San Jose so most of the things we printed in English were also printed in Spanish. And Brazil, which is Portuguese, came out of Africa, it wasn't under the local thing. But when they first came here they had trouble, the local printers were not able to furnish the needs of the Rosicrucian Order and so Harry Shibley, who had known Dr. A. Spencer Lewis somewhere -- I don't know what the connection was -- he talked Harry Shibley into coming down here and open a big enough print shop to handle the work, which he did

somewhere in the early '30s I believe because I didn't start work for 'em until 1934. And at one time, the Rosicrucian Press work was about 65% of my volume and now with the turnover of the original leadership of the Rosicrucian Order and also the Rosicrucian Press the two companies have more or less separated and the Rosicrucian printing is a very very small fraction of the Rosicrucian Press printing. I advocated when they moved from the old building, the old Notre Dame High School building, to the new building that they change the name of the company but they didn't go along with it because the Livingstons owned it and I thought Livingston Lithograph was a terrific name (laughter) but they didn't follow that. But I developed to where I was, oh I guess I could say I was Assistant Manager; the boss actually owned it but he was away and so I was in charge of the plant a good part of the time. Then when his oldest son came into the business well that was about the time I was gettin' tired of the responsibility anyway so he took over. Ted Livingston came into the business and he really took right to it. He was very adaptable and so I helped as much as I could to get him educated and so forth and so I was demoted -- I wasn't actually demoted but I just took less active part of the management; I never lost any salary or money. But Ted was a terrific guy to work with, he was just like his father, terrific guy to work

with and we always got along fine right up to the time I retired and I retired on July 20, 1971 so I've been off 21 years now. But printing is a fascinating business. One of the experiences I had as representative of the Rosicrucian Press, I was negotiating their union contract and of all the unreasonable people in the world to deal with are union negotiators. I made a complete survey of all the union scales around the United States and found that San Francisco had a scale slightly larger than San Jose but the San Francisco scale was the highest in the United States with the exception of the Jewish Union in New York City. Now I don't know what the reason for that was except I think that Jewish typesetting is somthin' like Chinese where you have to have a character for each word. So I laid 'em on the table, I said, "Here's the wages we're paying in the United States and they wanted us to pay more than San Francisco because they said that well San Franciscans made more and we should get the same as San Francisco but they did not take into consideration the fact that everything we bought was f.o.b. San Francisco, our paper, ink, the sheeting, anything we bought was f.o.b. San Francisco so actually our actual production costs were more than San Francisco. So they'd concede all the points that they say we wanted so anyway it ended up in a strike. I was a great negotiator, it ended up in a strike (laughter). And they were off nine

days and then the employers couldn't take it any longer so they went back to work and then for some unknown reason, for the first time in history San Francisco renegotiated its contract and they raised their scale to the San Jose scale (laughter), and so these characters were out of work for nine days for a total profit of \$9.00.

EG           Nine dollars a month?

TF           One \$9.00, not a month or a day, \$9.00 period. And of course they wanted to conduct their own pension and of course they always gave you the feel that you can't start a printing job unless you have it set, a typographical union; they were the leaders and the others would follow in. You can't start a printing job without having it set. Well at that time that was true. So then they had this union pension and their idea, at some basic sound time they were trying to give up pension to pay Social Security so that there would be no loss of pay when a man retired. And the reason the union wanted to have a contract is because the printers were rather mobile, they moved around all the time, they couldn't work one place to get a pension; they moved around so the union carried the contract but of course what they were doing, they were taking the income from the present workers to pay

off the old workers. And then came along computerized typesetting where you did it photographically on a typewriter key, anybody who could run a typewriter could run a -- and the newspapers completely lost out. As a matter of fact, some of the material that was run like the financial section in New York, it's set by one or two men in New York and telegraphed all over the country and you have one typesetter for the whole country. And they tried to fight that but it was just too much, they just couldn't make it. The result was the typesetters union went completely bankrupt and I couldn't help but smirk, I don't know why, but too bad a lot of my good friends really lost money but they were so arrogant and so unreasonable really that I guess the union had it coming, not the individuals necessarily. But I can remember the first plant I ever was in that was completely computerized was over at the Las Vegas Review Journal. Gosh, you walked in there you'd see all these beautiful girls that looked like private secretaries in their high heels and beautifully dressed, they'd also have an apron on, and they're pasting up this material, putting it in; boy! no composer of mine was like that before. And of course the Mercury's the same way now except the Mercury gave the union people a chance to learn the computers to take over the jobs but they're being replaced mostly by women as they often do.

EG About when did it go computer?

TF The Mercury?

EG No, when did computers come into the printing field?

TF Oh about 10 or 15 years ago. The Las Vegas Review Journal was the first one I was in and the next one that I knew about was the Sacramento Union. I don't know if you've ever seen a copy of the Sacramento Union or not but they run these beautiful color pictures, you know, that's all computerized stuff. And of course like the Rosicrucian Press used to hire 10 compositors, they're down to two now and they also have a computer and they switch back and forth, set type once in a while and use computers because certain things have to be done with a different kind like a letter press, for instance, like letterheads, not letterheads so much but envelopes are hard to get through a machine-fed press so they hand feed those and also for guy cutting, that's where you cut around a margin like this. They have one press that's the only press in town operating, a silver press, it's a big press, it's the only one in town now operating and most exclusively on die cutting for the printers and sold of course. But anyway, the printing business is completely revised and Leonard McKay was over the other

day and he was telling me about a new press coming out that's gonna cost between \$400 and \$500,000.00. But you just take your layouts and place 'em down on a sheet, pull down and run 'em through, photographs, everything automatic; it prints the four-color pictures I need on the other side at the other end. Course it's gonna take a lot of printing to pay for \$400,000.00 but the business is completely revised and in the future the only letter press that's gonna be available is in hobby shops and maybe some small printers will hang on. But another thing that came along, a few years ago they had what they called monolith or small lithograph presses and every company had a monolith, Food Machinery, First National Bank, most of the County, City, they all had these little monolith presses. Well, then came the copying machine and it put the monolith people out of business because anybody could run a copying machine but the others you had to have ink and you had to have paper and all that; so the small lithograph business is out of business although the big presses are still going profitable. Printing was not a very high profitable business but the bigger companies are doing all right but the big printing business has practically moved out of the Bay Area, mostly because of the wage scale because San Francisco is the highest labor scale in the United States and its people wouldn't pay it. For instance, I've had books



printed where I could send 'em to a company in Ann Arbor, Michigan that I had good luck with and I could get it printed on bond back there cheaper than I can get a printer down here and do my own shipping. But it's too bad because a lot of people lost work but all the big companies and services, Carlisle, Schwabacher Fry, Sacatron, \_\_\_\_\_ Label, they're all gone. Next subject.

EG I'd like to talk about your community involvement. Let's talk about the Landmarks Commission, how you got involved with that and when you first started and what you and your other commissioners did.

TF Well of course actually to go back into my forebears, I come from a rather historic family. You can't read a history of California without finding members of my family being mentioned. My great grandfather was a member of Fremont's Battalion and they came over in 1846, they were just ahead of the Donners, so I had sort of a background interest in history but never really followed through. But in all this traveling up and down for the Rosicrucian Press I've been up and down 101 till I was blue in the face so then I switched over and came up 99 and I got tired of that one so I switched over to the next one which I think is 95. I don't know where 97 went

but I hit 95 and so I went up and down that road a few times. The next one over, I was in Las Vegas one time and it was on business and so I said, "Well, I'll go up 93", this goes to Las Vegas, Tonopah, Hawthorne and around that way and so I \_\_\_\_\_ and I stayed overnight in Tonopah. Pah in Paiute is water and Tonopah means no water; all the water they get in Tonopah is piped from a very weak spring about three miles away. Anyway, I was sitting in a restaurant the next morning having breakfast and they had a rather nice menu for a little place like that but they had a little corner that told about a ghost town of Belmont -- Belmont, Nevada -- and it said it was 45 miles out. They didn't say it was dirt road but (chuckle) anyway, they said it was 45 miles out from \_\_\_\_\_ and I've got time -- this was 1952 -- and I was gonna take a ride out and look at this town. And so I found out it was 45 miles, 35 of it was on a two-lane rutted road, and I got out there and I was just impressed with it, all these old buildings and a big courthouse, abandoned courthouse, and I met a woman there, Mrs. Wallers, and she was the widow of the first one who made the original strike in Goldfield. He was her first husband, then he was killed and she was married again but she had no children by her first husband. He was killed by a nut that figured that he'd been cheated in the Goldfield strike and he shot him down. Anyway, I

had a most pleasant visit with her and as I came back I was all enthused about Belmont, Nevada so the next vacation I took the family over, and we slept out on a porch. I remember my daughter said, "Gee I could feel little feet running over me" (Laughter). But we slept out and of course we met Mrs. Wallers again and talked and fiddled around and so the next time we went back we used to stay in her house, many years. Hell it's been over 25 years, I guess. But then I started to branch out, every time I got a chance I went over to Nevada and went to a different place and I found the back country of Nevada very fascinating. I'd ride to Las Vegas and Reno time after time, I never stopped to put a nickel in a slot machine, just keep right on going. But I rounded up a terrific acquaintanceship over there, practically all dead now, of old-timers. I had a system, I'd run through the country and I'd take pictures, I'd make big 8x10 pictures, and then when I got back I'd mail the pictures to 'em. So then when I went back the next time that was a friend, all those old-timers see, and I could travel the length and breadth of Nevada -- I usually slept out, later I had a camper -- but I'd eat meals up and down Nevada all the way. And I always had a system, I'd carry food with me, like I used to carry these one-pound hams I'd take a dozen with me and when I had dinner with somebody I'd maybe bring a canned ham and a can of

peaches and so this was what I was gonna have for dinner so I paid for it. These people were very fine, very generous but they didn't have any money, practically all of 'em were just on small pensions. Of course they didn't pay rent and the housing was nothing to speak of. And the taxes, I don't know if they paid any taxes or not, if they didn't pay the taxes the county wouldn't bear down on 'em.

Anyway, they had a Landmarks Commission in San Jose and I knew of it but I wasn't particularly interested in the history of San Jose, in being active in it although I knew the officials around town, the City Manager and Mayor and like that, but a fellow by the name of Bill Burke he died in the middle of a term and it just so happened I met Clyde Arbuckle and Clyde knew of my interest in Nevada. He says, "Why didn't you come in the Landmarks Commission." And okay, you know, yeah that would be fine; I never applied for it formally but the next thing I knew I was on the Landmarks Commission. Well, the Landmarks Commission up to that time had two presidents, one was Charles Payne that ran a hardware store and the other was a Dr. Rhoades. When Payne died Rhoades took over at a district attorney's operation. The president was elected every year, nobody ran again. And they were nice people but they were afraid to ask for

things, they were afraid of I don't know what. But anyway, I got in and they passed that rule that you could only serve two terms on the commission and so I had a half a term I paid off and so when these other people went off they figured well I was gonna be on the commission the longest so I should be the president because my term wouldn't expire for another four years so that was the basis on which I was elected the president for the first time. Then when I got in there gee there were so many things that could be done that nobody was doin' anything about. Clyde has his museum out there, he kept it open three or four hours a day and people came in and Clyde is a great talker but not much of a writer and he wasn't a very good organizer. I don't know if you ever run any of his museum but he had \_\_\_\_\_ stacked, his museum looked like my room where things are just stacked all over the place. But with his memory he could put his hand on anything, nothing was filed, he could put his hand on anything any time he wanted because of his probably greatest memory of anybody I ever knew. Anyway, we got at a deal and I was on one of my trips and coming up from Bakersfield and I had heard about the Kern County Museum, what a good layout that was so I stopped at the Kern County Museum. Pretty good, I was quite impressed. There were some things I didn't like about it; for instance, in order to eliminate the fire hazard there was

about 50 feet between every building, they had some nice buildings but you'd get here and then you'd have to walk 50 feet to get in another one. I didn't like that idea. Anyway, the County Fair people they wanted to get rid of the museum, they didn't want it out there; they wanted the building and the museum was open at odd hours. They'd rent the County Fairgrounds out for some kind of event and there was the darn museum in the way so they wanted to get rid of the museum. So I started a campaign to move the museum and really establish a good city museum. Well people in general were in favor of the idea except Mike Antonacci who was the Director of Planning, Director of Planning I guess he was, and he was a hard working dedicated guy, nice fellow, but if he didn't think of the idea it was no good. And before I could get the property allocated to the museum I had to go through Planning Commission. So anyway, I made the proposal to the City Council and they reported, cause I knew people, to the Planning Department. Well he assigned the study over to Bert Druards(?), Bert is now head of the buildings out here, you know, he has business control of the auditorium, theater and all that. At that time he was the last man in the Planning Department, I guess, and he turned in a favorable report and Antonacci rejected it, he had \_\_\_\_\_ opposing the museum. But anyway, he wouldn't report in so after 15 months of

waiting for the report I went before the Council and stated that this material had been in there, in the Planning Department, for 15 months, two reports had been made of which I didn't know the exact contents of either one except I knew one somewhat favorable and the other was possibly somewhat not favorable and I asked that the Council instruct the Planning Director Antonacci, who lives around the corner, to give a report in 30 days. God he was mad (chuckle). Anyway, he hadn't even presented it to the Planning Commission so I went to a meeting of the Planning Commission and it voted against the museum by a six to one vote, or was it four to one, I don't remember. But I had one vote and like the fellow said, "Well there's no place else to put it, that's the logical place to put it." His name was Owen, he later was a City Councilman and died very young of cancer. But anyway, so the report goes into the Council with a, I guess it was, a four to one vote against the proposal and with the verbal report from the Planning Director that they had other plans for it. So I sent letters off to all the members of the Pioneers and asked them to write letters in favor of the museum and could as many as possible show up at the meeting, I had my daughters get as many friends as they could to come to the meeting and they received 88 letters in favor of the museum. And I must have had about a hundred supporters there in favor

of it and he gave his report and I got up and gave my rebuttal and what it could do for the City and everything I could think of in favor of it, the fact that we had all this material locally to build a museum but they didn't have anything to put in it, they were borrowing all the stuff, all the \_\_\_\_\_ of Oakland came from San Jose, they were borrowing from us (chuckle) to support their museum. So anyway, they took a vote and there were seven members on the council then and I got six aye votes and oh God, Antonacci was fit to be tied. Since then Frances has kidded him about it and he said, "Yeah, he really licked me." But I was one of the few persons that ever beat Antonacci in a City project. So then when he got the allocation of the deal then he had to get finances. Well the only paid employee we had was Arbuckle, \$11,000 a year at that time. Well that was one of the first things I did, I got him a raise; he was on part-time at \$4,000 a year and so I made a survey and found that the average professors at that time at the college was about \$11,000 so I put in a budget making him full-time at \$11,500 a year and they passed it. But one reason why the things \_\_\_\_\_, nobody ever asked them for anything and it was a matter of askin' 'em and you could get it. So anyway, we got the land allocated and then by golly they slipped one to me; they took the parking lot off. We lost the parking lot, that should've been museum



property and they got that one by me.

EG           You mean the parking lot between the Friendship Garden?

TF           Yeah, that should be museum property, that was a part of the original 15 acres. But then \_\_\_\_\_ very unfortunate, we hired a Museum Director who had been Assistant in Kern County and a very nice guy but he just couldn't get along with people and so he didn't last very long. Matter of fact, well he just didn't last very long, nice guy; he works for the Maritime Museum at Treasure Island now. Then while he was in there, he got a scholarship for Don DeMers to go to Cooperstown, which is a Museum School, and he got him a scholarship so DeMers went back there and got a Masters Degree in Museum Management and he came back and he took Guy's place which you'd think would be a made-to-order setup. But DeMers was all right in most ways except he was an 8 to 5 man, he didn't show up till 8:00 and at 5:00 he was out of there but he basically served normal business but he was more interested in being a policeman. He had to become a policeman by the time he was 35 and just before he was about 34 he transferred over to the Police Department where his father'd been a policeman. So that's when Mignon came in; I don't know where Mignon came from.

(End of Tape 2, Side 2.)

(Beginning of Tape 3, Side 1.)

EG \_\_\_\_\_ Tape 3 (Beginning of introduction not recorded).

TF Well, after DeMers left they imported Mignon Gibson as Director and I haven't the slightest idea where she came from, I never heard of her until she got the job. I understand that she was kind of a Chief Clerk or something out there but she has done a terrific job. She knows how to get along with people and the Museum has grown from one employee originally to about 12 now and the budget has gone from about \$20,000 to I think the last budget was \$768,000 so that it's really progressed along. To get the Museum started, we bought the Lew Bohnett collection for \$225,000 plus 9% sales tax and we had to pay a thousand dollars a month rent to keep it out there after seven days so they immediately threw up the two warehouse buildings at the Museum grounds. They were only supposed to be temporary but they've been (chuckle) there ever since the property has been in existence and they're filled with material at the time. Then I think the very first building to go on after that was the Doctor's building, which they were gonna tear down in

Santa Clara, and it's actually the oldest doctor's building in Santa Clara County and some famous doctors had practice in there including Austin Wasburton's father and like that. So I think that was the first building although one of the other early buildings was the Print Shop, which had originally been a house on the corner of North San Pedro and what we now call St. John Street; it was then San Augustin Street. But anyway, the Museum -- I don't get out there very often but I try to keep in touch with it -- and I'm very well pleased with its success and the method of operation and Mignon is just doin' a beautiful job. I think I am the only one that has her total home telephone number because when I call her up I'll say, "Hello Mignon", she'll say, "Oh yes Theron." So (laughter) anyway I call her occasionally just to chat or get some information and so forth.

But one of the other projects we had was the Peralta Adobe. The Peralta Adobe is the oldest house in Northern California and nobody was takin' care of it; as a matter of fact, when they built that office building next door to it they had to rip off about six inches of the west wall because the property extended over the \_\_\_\_\_. Course today we could stop that but we couldn't at that time or at least I didn't know what to do about it. So I proposed to the City that they buy the

Peralta Adobe. I forget the price but Virginia Sheaffer, who was the first woman councilwoman in San Jose, she took hold of the idea. And she was not very popular with the other council people, being the only woman on it they really picked on her in my estimation. But she took ahold of this as a major project and so she put through to purchase the back lot and the other lot on the other side to get more room and I think the Council went along with it mostly to keep her happy and (chuckle) keep her quiet (laughter). But anyway to Virginia Sheaffer you have to give full credit for gettin' that back lot and the side and of course then there was some renovation on it that did very good. So I consider that was one of my second achievements.

The third, another achievement, was when they put the Highway 280 through San Jose they'd just gone through Nevada City and they tore down a whole couple, three or four blocks of historic buildings in Nevada City, the Highway Department, and they caught the devil from everybody in the state for tearing down those buildings. So when they moved through San Jose they were very cautious -- this was the next project after Nevada City. And so they gave me a map of the freeway and the map was 11 inches deep and folded up to about 22 feet long and all of the route. And I could see it immediately it was

going within 10 feet of the Roberto Adobe. So I said gee that couldn't be, you know, because apparently they were just gonna take the Roberto Adobe and tear it down. So I couldn't go for that so I called it to their attention the fact that this was a real historic building, as a matter of fact we didn't know how historic it was until later. I said, "Is it possible to move it to the north a little bit and also to change the bulkheads, instead of a horizontal bulkhead to make a vertical bulkhead on the Roberto Adobe corner?" And a fellow by the name of Peter Ogden was the engineer on the thing and he's a descendant of the Ogden, Utah Ogdens and quite a nice young chap and he said he didn't know but he'd get back to me. Well, you know, the way those things go you figure that's the end of it but by golly two weeks later he came back and he said yes they could move the highway 15 feet to the north and they could put that vertical bulkhead in there which would give 'em a total of 30 feet between the freeway and the building and so that's how it was done so for a while they were kiddin' me about bein' the freeway bender (laughter). But that was, I think, quite an achievement. I found the Highway Department very, not easy to work with but they made sense, they were good people to talk to and we had several confrontations on that. And then the interesting thing about the Roberto Adobe, the adobe itself is just one little corner of the

building and the rest of it was, oh I forget the history on that; Frances wrote a book on it if you want to get that you can get the book. But anyway, we'd always thought the whole building was adobe but when they got into it they found it was fired brick covered over with stucco and it was built about the early 1850's or maybe late 49's. And Monterey always brags about having the first fired brick building in California, well the fella that built that building lived in San Jose before he went to Monterey. As a matter of fact, he spent the winter of '46-'47 at Mission Santa Clara so in my estimation in my knowledge he never tried to establish that this was the very first fired brick building in California but it could be, and they have left a nice open glass place where you can look in and see the original fired place. It was on land that John Brazone bought, he bought it because he owned a lot in back of it and he wanted rear access to his building so he bought it so he could have that driveway down the building and he spent \$300,000 rehabilitating that building when he got interested in it and of course like a lot of those projects you get into it and you can't get out. But he has a couple lawyers in there now and he will reluctantly show you through if you go over but you don't have to go into the building, you can walk around it and I think you can get the sense of it. The inside has been modernized in particular, it no

longer looks like it did, if you could go. There's a fig tree in the back that probably, it could be -- I'm just guessing -- it could be the largest fig tree in San Jose or this area. I think there's a big fig tree down at Tombstone, Arizona that covers practically a whole city block. But anyway, I felt quite proud of that and people still they ask me and the building's noticed and Frances wrote a book on it that isn't too widely circulated but the information.... Oh yeah, another interesting thing, the building was on Rancho de la Coches. A coche in Spanish means coach, horse coach like that, and this area for some reason had a colloquial meaning of pigs \_\_\_\_\_ you got the Olla de las Coches down at Morgan Hill somewhere, which literally means Pig Springs because the wild pigs used to drink there, and for some reason this is called Rancho de las Coches because they originally raised pigs for the Mission Santa Clara on the property and the rancho became the Rancho de las Coches and it was the first and it was the first case in the United States Court that decided that an Indian could get a land grant. So that was confirmed to \_\_\_\_\_. Now the funny thing about that was practically every book, well I'll say every book, that you ever read on the Roberto Adobe will say Roberto, a Christianized Indian. But my stepfather lived about, let's see, one, two, about three blocks away also owned the Rancho de las Coches -- as a matter of

fact, this is the Rancho de las Coches where we are now -  
- and he had an abstract of title, which they used to  
give property owners that looked at the whole history of  
it, and in that title, put the title insurance they call  
it, it told about Roberto, his last name, his wife's  
name, the name of his children and the whole history of  
the family and they all died within about a year \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ -- I forget the names of the people now -- but  
the Roberto Adobe actually was owned by him, the  
history's there. It wasn't just Roberto, he had a last  
name and a family of son and daughter, then the -- I  
forget the exact routine -- but a sea captain bought it  
and he was the father-in-law of Sansevain, who was the  
first City Engineer. At one time, Auzerais Avenue from  
the Los Gatos Creek to Meridian was called Sansevain and  
all of like Paula and some of those streets were named  
after his children. That was one of the very early  
subdivisions in San Jose, which at that time was really  
out in the country. So that was my third achievement.

My fourth one was I got the City to allocate money for  
Clyde to write the history of San Jose. Well Clyde being  
the procrastinator that he is, he took the money on a  
monthly basis but he didn't write anything so finally  
after about 20 years Leonard McKay got on him and would  
go over day-by-day and get what copy he'd written and put



the pressure on him and they finally got a book out, which was a great asset for the town, and I think Clyde is very proud of his book although personally I think -- you know, there are a thousand ways to print a book, all of them good; he's got a good book but it isn't the way I would have done it (laughter). i can't criticize it because I realize it's the way the book was done so those were my main achievements. So then, when I went off the Landmarks Commission, at that time the Council'd listen to me and they'd appoint anybody to the Commission that I recommended and so I went after historians and people who were interested in history for the vacancies. And nowadays you got all these citizens want to make brownie points and they apply to get on the Commission, they don't know a darn thing about the Commission and they get appointed and the result is you got a Commission that's going nowhere. So the Landmarks Commission turned into a preservation commission and I guess in that respect, I haven't followed it but I haven't heard too much criticism in that respect, but they absolutely gave up the Museum because at that time the Commission operated the Museum but in no time at all the Commission had nothing to do with the Museum and the Landmarks Commission was on preservation and nobody knows how it happened. Anyway, when I went off the Commission I got Frances appointed so she served eight years as President

of the Landmarks Commission. It was during her presidency that they had that Murphy Building deal. Well that was a very interesting deal because of the fact that there was a new law came into effect that made it that you couldn't tear down a historic building without certain stipulations for instance like where Boccardo owns the old Christian Science Church and they won't let him tear it down and what the deuce you gonna do with the building. There are other cases too, oh like the Greenawalt House out on Almaden Road; the state couldn't tear it down so they had to pay that and move it to the Museum. I think the Museum needed that like they needed nothing, I mean, but \_\_\_\_\_ and that law is in effect. Well that law came into effect and nobody in the City knew anything about it and so when they came to the point where they wanted to tear down the Mercury Building the County Heritage Commission knew of the law, this new law. And Phyllis Butler and Dorothy Gray were the leaders of it, I think one was President and one was Secretary, both of them divorced their husbands shortly after that, but they were friendless and wanted to make a mark. Matter of fact, Phyllis Butler wrote a book on How to Succeed in Politics for Women, pretty good book actually. But Frances was caught in the situation where they wanted to tear down the Mercury Building, which was absolutely no use whatsoever because also under the

present laws you've gotta have access for wheelchairs and elevators, wide doorways and the building had nothing of that. The upstairs was just a little -- only had one entry upstairs and little narrow stairway -- and the only claim to it was that the Mercurys had owned it at one time, they'd never operated a business there and at one time the second floor was used for a courthouse. But it had no real historical significance but they made a big issue of it. Course Francis was caught in the middle, she didn't know too much, but anyway the lawyer Hugh Center, who was the lawyer for the owner, he took hold and he gave her a lot of help; I can remember that. I went to one court hearing and Frances wasn't there but the attorney for Butler and Gray was there, fellow by the name of Vorheis, \_\_\_\_\_ both attorneys and they were just out to make a name for themselves, they were just gettin' started. And he made some crack about Frances and her operation of the Landmarks and gee Hugh Center got up and tore him to pieces (laughter) and the judge didn't stop him, and I don't know who the judge was, I forget, and Vorheis pulled in his horns but Hugh really let him have it. But they were very vicious and they \_\_\_\_\_ everything as being selfishness. It's one thing to have a building that maybe should be preserved but who's gonna pay to preserve it and what are you gonna do with it when you get it done, you know.

That Christian Science Building can never be a profitable operation and Boccardo wanted to build an apartment house there, which would be very handy for the people around there; it would be a big asset, I think, but they can't get permission to tear the building down. If Boccardo can't do it, I don't know who can.

EG      June 11, 1992.    This is Ellen Garboske continuing an interview with Theron Fox at his home on Yosemite Avenue.

What are your memories of Lake Monahan and Thomas Monahan?

TF      Well I knew Tom Monahan, who was an undertaker and mayor, quite well. When I was working for the San Jose News, he used to come in and bring the funeral announcements in and he always had an Irish joke, he had a different joke every day and he was a very jovial fellow and we were always glad to see him come in because he was always good for a few laughs. And of course it was under his mayorship that they tried to dam up the creek, the Los Gatos Creek of the Guadalupe River, just by what is now St. John Street and to make a lake out of it. Well the dam was quite successful all right but in those days they had no way of controlling mosquitoes so in addition to the swimmers and boating you also had clouds of

mosquitoes and it was primarily for that reason that the dam was destroyed and the water allowed to flow freely. You can go by St. John Street now and look south from the bridge and you still see the remains of the dam over on the opposite banks of the creek. It might be that they're always talking about this Guadalupe Park and now that they have ways of controlling the mosquitoes, it would be possible today, I believe, to reinstate that dam and maybe have a beautiful downtown lake if only we got enough water to put in it; course that's a problem too. That happened up at Clear Lake. I can remember going up to Clear Lake when it was absolutely impossible to exist up there because of the mosquitoes and then they got the mosquito problem solved and now of course it's one of the beautiful California lakes. So Lake Monahan could be reinstated as Lake Monahan or after another mayor, it depends who's in office at the time, but Monahan will always be remembered in the history of San Jose because he was quite a fellow all the way through. I don't remember any particular activities that he had but he was such a great personality individually that he's the type of person that to know him you'd never forget him is the way it was on him.

EG

Okay, what about when the electric light tower collapsed in 1915 and maybe even before that what you remember

about when the tower was standing.

TF

Well, the tower was quite a landmark, it was so well known in the world, as a matter of fact, that the fellow wrote a letter from Germany and addressed it to "the man under the tower" and it was delivered to the bartender from a little bar, The Tower Saloon, underneath the tower, from Germany and that was the only address it had "under the tower." The tower itself was quite spectacular. Where we lived on Auzerais Avenue, we lived right at the bend of the road on Auzerais Avenue, and of course in those days you didn't have the air conditioning and on hot summer evenings you'd sit out on the porch and we had an extensive porch along one side of the house and we'd sit out on the porch and we'd wait for those lights on the tower to come on across the tower -- it was at least a mile or a mile and a half away -- and that was quite spectacular. They'd all sit there and they'd say, "There it comes." It was a disaster really that it fell down but it was very fortunate that it fell down the way it did. They were trying to repair it because of the rust of it and it damaged some of the trestles and so forth and so they had some scaffolding on it but it came to about two o'clock in the afternoon when there was torrential rainfall and everybody in town, course there were no automobiles then to speak of, but everybody

dashed for cover and when the tower fell it didn't fall over it collapsed, it telescoped, and there was nobody under it, right in the middle of the main intersection of town at two o'clock on a Saturday afternoon and that was a phenomenal thing in itself. Another angle on the tower, originally when it was turned on when it was first built the power was supplied by Gillespy's Mill, which was located on then Orchard Street, now Almaden Avenue, and my stepfather was a roustabout at Gillespy's Mill and he was there when they put the switch on to turn the light on and the first thing they did was run outside with a newspaper to see if they could read a newspaper by the light of the tower. Cause that was one of the big reasons for building the tower, they said it would do away with all the street lights in San Jose; that tower would light the entire town. Course San Jose was much smaller then and it did furnish a good deal of light but of course it never did fulfill that function. But it was a great landmark, people used to come stay overnight just to see the tower lit. Course that was surpassed in 1915, the same year it fell down, by the Tower of Jewels at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, I guess it must have been taller than that, all these glass ornaments on it reflected light; it sort of made the San Jose tower take second place. But it was quite a big feature in San Jose and the farmers, hill people as far

as Morgan Hill were complaining that the light of the tower would keep their chickens from going to roost at night on a regular time and there was a lot of discussion that seems humorous today but it was very serious in those days. It was quite a landmark and we still have numerous references to the tower even though there're not many people alive that were around in 1915 that can remember.

EG           Okay, what about your memories of when the Fire Department still used horses to pull their equipment.

TF           Oh, I remember horses real well. In my mind, there is nothing more beautiful than the horses going to a fire. They're a part of the team, they knew it and they knew their parts and they were well trained and just to see these horses come down the street and everybody of course would dash out to the sidewalk to watch 'em go by. And there was a fella by the name of Tim Sullivan, he loved horses and he was a fireman and he told me himself that the only reason he joined the Fire Department was so he could be with the horses and when they motorized the Fire Department Tim Sullivan quit the Fire Department and went into another occupation. But he was quite a horseman. I've never seen a picture that depicted the fire horses. There was a silent movie that came out during the '20's,



I guess, called the Fifth Alarm and it was about a fire house in Chicago where this old man and his horses were assigned to the sticks, well out in the country out of Chicago, and every good thing else was mechanized and then at the foul-up there was this episode came along, I don't remember the details, but where they had to call in the horse, the horse-drawn \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. As I remember, that was quite a spectacular film made where they showed these horses. I'd like to see that picture again but I guess that was just a \_\_\_\_\_ that I'd never see surface today but I'll always remember that picture as being a very spectacular thing called the Fifth Alarm. But there's nothing prettier than trained horses and horses that are part of a team even like if you go to a circus and see what they call, they call it the free something, free means they're not under bridle and everything, they go through their routine of training but there's one thing where first they go twos, then fours, then eights and go around and apparently keep in tune with the music but the trick there is the bandmaster watches the horses and he keeps tune with the horses (laughter). A little skullduggery there but a horse act is a terrific scene at a circus and unfortunately we don't have enough horses around today. When they have the Oakland affairs at the museum they usually have a horse patrolman there and one of the biggest attractions

for the kids is these horses where they can go up to a horse and talk with the policeman, ride them, a big attraction (clearing his throat). A beautiful horse is an animal all of its own, it's intelligent and you can polish and keep 'em so clean, scrub 'em down, but the horse-drawn fire engines were a thing of all their own. Unfortunately, there's not enough written about 'em or disclosed about 'em but it was a great era.

EG           You mentioned the circus. You recall the circus coming to town when you were young?

TF           Oh yes. In those days the circus always had a circus parade in the morning and you could always get excused from school to go to the circus parade. Course they'd have all the animals and the clowns and everything and then the last item of the parade would be the calliope, or cal-li'-ope whichever you want to call it, but they'd have all the elephants and the lions in cages and everything else and it was called a Spectacular. I didn't go to many circuses but I never missed a parade that came to town and they're a lot of fun and great for the kids. Later on they got so that the circus would come to town and there were so many city restrictions on 'em, the city didn't want to clean up after the animals, and restrictions that circuses finally eliminated the

parade much to the loss of the young kids of the town. I can remember going to one, it was a wild west show, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. It was held right over here where that church is on the Alameda just around the corner over there and I remember seeing Buffalo Bill, the Wild West Show wasn't a circus in that sense of the word. And there's \_\_\_\_\_ too, of Buffalo Bill's horse Wyatt lived in the third house from the corner down there across the street (laughter) but that's just a little sideline gossip. But of course later on I got to be quite a circus fan, I'd go to circuses. I remember one time I went to a little dinky circus that was playing over at Modesto and a friend of mine and I rode over to see this little, I guess it was a one-ring circus, maybe it was two, but it was called the DeLane Circus and there was five brothers, they were all circus performers, and they owned this little ramshackle circus and we went over there. Both our wives thought we were crazy to ride 80 miles (laughter) to see a dinky circus like that. But the circus under a tent, I never could go for a circus in an auditorium; you had to have the sawdust and the dirt and the smell and so forth to really have a circus. But I haven't been to circuses for years now, mostly it's just too hard to get there, but a circus is an entertainment all of its own, something different, something that takes an enormous amount of organization,

that has to be put together very sharply and routinely and everything has to go clockwork. It's easy to admire them, a circus and the people who work in it although they don't have the best reputation in the world (laughter).

EG I remember that when I was young that we were always excited when the circus came to town or when the carnivals came to town. Did you have a lot of carnivals here too?

TF Yes, carnivals, I was always quite interested in carnivals (chuckle). You hit another corner depth. I used to go out during my vacation sometimes and work with carnivals for a couple weeks at a time. As a matter of fact, I researched on it and I wrote a book called "How to Make Money With Carnival Games" and it sold all right but it's pretty hard to reach the field that would be interested in it. But in the book I described the difference between gambling games and games of chance and games of skill and about six months ago I got a long distance telephone call and a fellow said, "This is the Sheriff's Office in Santa Barbara County", and I was gettin' ready to tell him why I haven't been to Santa Barbara County for 20 years, but he went on and he says, "You wrote a book called 'How to Make Money With Carnival

Games'", he says, "We'd like to get a copy." (Chuckle)  
And I told him I didn't have a copy but I knew that there was still a trick, there was a fellow in Atlanta, Georgia that bought the book from me and so I looked up the address and gave it to him and I asked him I said, "Are you havin' trouble with carnivals down there?" He says, "Yeah, we're havin' a little problem down here." I said, "Well, who told you to call me?" He says, "Well, the Sheriff of San Luis Obispo (laughter) called me and said to call you, that you're the one that had written this book that they'd found very useful." (Laughter) So the book is the best book ever written on the subject but there's just not a big enough field to make it a popular venture.

EG           It sounds to me like law enforcement thought it was a good book (laughter).

TF           Yeah, well the Sheriff of Santa Clara County has one too. The sheriff at that time, I can't remember his name, he was a one-term sheriff, and he had admitted here in the paper how he cleaned up the carnival at the Fairgrounds and it was the most ridiculous statement I ever heard in my life, it was absolutely ridiculous, and so I dropped him a note with one of my folders, I said, "Sheriff, what you need is a good book on the subject." And by return

mail I got an order with a check for the book. So there's at least three sheriff offices in the state that use the book (chuckle) and as I say it I modestly admit that it's the best book ever written on the subject because probably it's the only one (laughter) ever written on the subject. Of course it was written before the days of electronics and as I explained to the Sheriff's Office in Santa Barbara, I said the book was written and published in 1956 before electronics and so it wouldn't apply to I don't know what the advances have been. But there was good money to be made in carnivals. I remember one time I went up and worked with crafts at the Concestria(?) Craft Shows at the State Fair for 11 days and I slept right in the back of a tent and never left the fairgrounds for 11 days. They had showers there so I was able to get a shower every day but it was pretty hot, but during that 11 days -- this must have been about 1950 or so -- and I made a thousand dollars in that time which of course was big big money at that time but I enjoyed it. I always found this about carnival people, they're very honest among themselves, they may put the pressure on the public but between themselves they're very honest and entirely reliable. I used to make \_\_\_\_\_ badges and I used to do a terrific business with carnivals and concessionaires like \_\_\_\_\_. I remember I had one customer, he was my best customer as

a matter of fact, and he'd never pay me during the season, the bill would get up to be oh a couple thousand dollars, you know, and I'd been supplying him all year and never paid. And so Fresno was the last fair of the season so when the Fresno fair was on, and he had the concession over there, I would go over there and I wouldn't have any trouble findin' him, he was a big operator there. First he'd say, "Oh let's go have a cup of coffee", and so we'd go and have a cup of coffee and he'd always say, "Have you got my bill?" which I naturally had, around \$2,000.00 of it maybe covering 25 or 30 purchases. He'd say, "Okay." So we'd go out between two tents, it was a good place, he'd reach in his pocket and pay me the \$2,000.00 or whatever it was in cash (laughter) in full and he did that year after year. I don't know how many years I made buttons but he did that year after year. He finally bought my equipment, he thought he could run it but he wasn't set up to run it and last I heard the equipment was standing in the rain in the back of a print shop in Oakland. I felt sorry about that because most of it was special made, I had a machinist make it for me, it was semi-automatic. Anyway, the carnival business is a very very interesting business and there's a lot of chicanery goes on with it too and they have their problems in the \_\_\_\_\_. And of course the trouble is everybody

thinks they're a bunch of crooks but I wouldn't say they're crooks but they're quick (laughter), they can out-talk you and they can out-think you, the average carnival goer. But I never had any trouble with 'em, I always got along with 'em; I belonged to that Show Folks of America. There's a funny thing, when I retired from work I went through the list of all the organizations I belonged to, I had to cut down expenses, I don't know how many, I knew I was paying 'em dues, and two organizations I dropped was the California Pioneers and the California Historical Society and the Show Folks of America. Show Folks of America was a carnival organization and they owned a bunch of funeral plots and if I should die and be indigent, as a former carnival man they would supply me a free burial space and they're very proud of that and they keep that up \_\_\_\_\_. But anyway, I dropped these three organizations, the prodigious California Pioneers, the prodigious California Historical Society and the Show Folks. Two of 'em didn't respond, the Show Folks Secretary sent me a two-page single-space letter acknowledging my long years of membership and the things I had done and a very beautiful letter, and they were the low-brows. So sometimes the low-brows aren't as low as they're depicted to be because all the California Historical Society did was keep sending me past-due notices and I resigned way before my membership ran out.



So I'm a Carny at heart; I still get Christmas cards from a couple of Carnies. As a matter of fact, I don't exactly get Christmas cards, I send them a Christmas card and they telephone back. I don't know if the guy can write or not, this particular guy he got out of World War II by saying he couldn't read or write. Course he could but he was able to put it over that he couldn't, that he couldn't read or write and he stayed out of the service. What do they call that when you can't read and write?

EG            Illiterate?

TF            He's illiterate, he's completely illiterate. But I bet you he could figure percentages and interests and markups faster (laughter) than any that I know. But the carnival business is quite interesting.

(End of Tape 3, Side 1.)

(Beginning of Tape 3, Side 2.)

EG            (Beginning of statement cut off) with Theron Fox June 11, 1992.

You were a member of a magicians club and evidently you have done some magic shows in your lifetime. Could you talk about that.

TF Well, I was very much interested in magic but actually I was never a performer although I was Assistant Editor of a magic magazine, The Bat, for about 17 years while it was in publication, \_\_\_\_\_ published it, \_\_\_\_\_ I printed it but it was actually published out of Oakland and I was Secretary of the Pacific Coast Association of Magicians for five years which was quite a prestigious position \_\_\_\_\_. I got to meet people like Edgar Bergen, Orson Wells and I sat next to Rita Hayworth while she was married to Orson; I didn't sit next to her, I sat in front of her, in front of her. When she was married to Orson Wells they went to a magic show in Los Angeles. And I always got a kick out of my name dropping of prizes. You know Joseph Cotton?

EG Yes.

TF Well Orson Wells introduced me to him (laughter). I always liked to drop that name-dropping thing. It sounds funny but during World War II Orson Wells had put up what he called a "tent theater" in Hollywood called the Mercury Theater at which he put on a free magic show for veterans. Anybody in uniform could go in free but he had a hundred seats in the front that he sold for \$5.00 a piece and that was the public and that paid the expenses. He said it paid the expenses but I don't know, it looked

like a pretty -- course he might have got a lot of donations too along the way. But his was one terrific magic show and being Secretary of the Association well after the show I went back and he introduced me to Joseph Cotton. And Marlene Dietrich was in the show too and he sent and asked her to come but she had already left or I'd have met her, possibly met Marlene Dietrich. I was accompanied by a fellow by the name of Lloyd Jones, who was a big man in magic in the promotion and development of magic, not a performer particularly, although he was a pretty good performer too. But I myself never ever performed although I'd write up tricks and invent 'em and edit them and things like that. As a matter of fact, my last venture in magic, I might say, there was a dealer in Los Angeles by the name of Thayer and he was the biggest dealer in the United States, I think, and he found a collector who had all those secrets of all his tricks that he sold and so we put together a four-volume set of all these tricks that this fellow Thayer had had and I edited the first volume and then I had a co-editor for the last three volumes. Frankly, the co-editor did most of the work, she was a lovely person and I enjoyed working with her very much. Let's see, I was 75, that was 12 years ago; anyway that would be 1980 wouldn't it? And I remember when I was in the hospital with my heart operation and she brought me a model of a heart for

replacement and she brought it in a bag that you get when you have your car refitted or something, they take parts out of your car and they put it in this replacement bag and she brought it with a bag. And the nurses at the hospital got a large kick out of it and they took it to show others and it was gone for two days, I thought I'd lost it but it finally came back. The nurses got a big bang out of that heart and the bag. I have it somewhere but I haven't the slightest idea where it is.

Anyway, getting back to magic, Lloyd Jones died and so that was my major contact but I'm still a life member (chuckle) life member of the Oakland Magic Circle. A couple weeks ago the phone rang and Frances answered and a fellow said, "Is this the Fox residence?" She said, "Yes", and he said, "Is Theron Fox still alive?" (Laughter) Kind of a funny feeling to have him ask that but they were checking up on their mailing list and wanted to make sure that I was still around. But I got on the phone, I had quite a chat with him. So I'm a life member of the Oakland Magic Circle and also a life member of the Pacific Coast Association of Magicians although I haven't been to one of their conventions for years. Matter of fact, I think today their convention's always at Asilomar, the Pacific Coast. It's a great affair but I don't know, I just worked my way out of that. I worked

at all the hobbies but nearly ended \_\_\_\_\_  
(chuckle).

EG Then you didn't perform magic yourself. You wrote about it.

TF I wrote about it, edited it and published it and, matter of fact, during World War II I pulled out a box of tricks, "Fifteen Sealed Mysteries", in which you had 15 envelopes in there and each one had a trick in it and I did really well with it. But maybe I shouldn't talk about Frances but she had a magic act and during World War II she used to give shows for hospitals and veterans groups and did quite well but she doesn't like to be reminded of that now (laughter).

EG Well we'll have to ask her about that when we interview her.

TF (Laughter)

EG You remember, well let's talk about World War I a little bit more. The Spanish Influenza in 1918, course that was kind of right at the end of World War I, but that affected so many people here.

TF

As I look back on it, it was many years ago now, at the Battle of Orettas(?), and the thing I remember mostly about the flu, course you had to wear those masks, which there was always a question whether they did any good or not, but the luncheon clubs used to hold their meetings out in the St. James Park so they wouldn't be inside and everybody sittin' around wearing a mask and trying to eat under the mask. But the thing that impressed me most, I remember so well, is the list of the deaths in the paper every day in the News. The News used to run it on the front page and they ran from 10 to 20 people a day dying in San Jose and we had a very beautiful young woman neighbor of ours that died, I can't remember her name now, but the thing was her mother had been confined to a wheelchair for years and here's this beautiful young woman who was her main help, you know, and caught the flu and died very quick. But I don't remember if I actually ever caught the flu or not at that time, I had it later, but then I was around carrying newspaper routes and I was all over the town but mostly out-of-doors. But it was a terrible thing, if you put the perspective today, that the \_\_\_\_\_ were running say 10 deaths a day in those days, today that would be a hundred deaths a day in San Jose, that's a great proportion. So it would be terrible, it was terrible, the undertakers couldn't keep up. And they didn't want to discourage people from going

to funerals because they didn't want to get a -- tried to disseminate crowds. I don't remember whether theaters closed or not, seems to me they did but I don't remember specific on that. But it was terrible, there's no question about it because you always had that fear like you think there's a hijacker around the corner or something (laughter) but the fear is always there.

EG Did pretty much everyone wear the masks?

TF Oh yeah, you got arrested if you didn't. If you went downtown without a mask you got arrested.

EG And then what did they do with the people after they arrested them? Do you know that?

TF I don't know, I always wore it. I think everybody wore it.

EG They were good about it.

TF Yeah, everybody wore it. I know I wore one all the time but I think everybody downtown wore it. I know there are pictures of it in existence showing some luncheon club in St. James Park and everybody with a mask on.

EG           About 1917, the Santa Clara Street bridge collapsed. You recall that and anything about it? I guess there was a train on it.

TF           No no, there was a streetcar line but the streetcars in those days used to pull freight cars and there was somebody out in the eastern part of town, I don't know exactly where, but out in the more or less in the country club area out there and they grew sugar beets. And so they had these two cars, open face cars, filled with these sugar beets and so they were pulling it back in the town to get to the railroad station and it was too heavy for the old wooden bridge and the bridge collapsed and there was a boy on a bicycle on the bridge at the time and he was killed. And I rode out, course I was (chuckle) I had learned to \_\_\_\_\_ my bicycle technique and so I rode out and I saw the caved-in cars. They weren't boxcars, they were kind of open....

EG           Gondolas?

TF           Gondola-type, I guess they're called, and they were in the creek, the two ridges and down, and full of sugar beets. But it was quite a deal at the time, of course I think they rebuilt the bridge a couple times since then because when they replaced it in those days everything



was two lanes and now it's four lanes. So I'm sure the bridge has been rebuilt at least once although I'm not positive about it, I'm sure it must have been.

EG        Okay, Clarence Goodwin was the City Manager for, oh I guess, quite a few years in the 1920's and he had close ties to Charley Bigley, who was the political boss in the area at that time. Do you have any memories of when they worked?

TF        Well, to start before that, San Jose had had a mayor who was a denizen's man of the last mayor before then -- I can't think of his name now but I knew him too, that's where my memory fails and I can't remember these names. But they put in the City Manager form of government, which was supposed to take it out of politics, and the first City Manager we had was a fellow by the name of Bailey, Dr. Bailey, and he was a government expert from the University of California, he was a college professor, and he came down and he was gonna theoretically show how a town could be run. But he didn't stay very long, I don't know what the reason was, but he was succeeded by another college professor by the name of Thomas Reed and I knew his family quite well, they lived on the northwest corner of Thirteenth and San Antonio Street. And he had a son about my age and we got to know each other quite

well, I was visiting and all that. But then when he left, Clarence Goodwin was, he wasn't even the City Engineer as I recall, he was just an Assistant City Engineer in the City office, and he was a nice young chap, hadn't been out of Stanford too long and he was a nice clean-cut young chap and for some reason or other, some way or other, Bigley got him appointed to be City Manager. And over the years practically every \_\_\_\_\_, I can't say for sure but at least I can think of one exception, but every fireman and every policeman appointed in San Jose was \_\_\_\_\_ through Bigley's office. That was the story and I know one exception. The Police Department had a baseball team, they had a good baseball team but they didn't have a catcher and so there was a young fellow in town by the name of Ray Blackmore, who was a pretty fair bush league catcher, so he got appointed to the Police Department so he could be the catcher of the baseball team and of course he stayed with the baseball team for years and years, I mean with the Police Department, and ended up for many years as Chief of Police. But he didn't come actually through the Bigley order, he came through a baseball team (laughter). But Goodwin did everything possible but cut down on taxes, he'd a been a good one today to cut taxes. The town was run very meagerly and so when he went out of office there was so much that

could be done, they were so many years behind that it was bad. They had what they called, I forget what they call it, but now Eddie Renzel was on it, a fellow worked for the San Jose Railroads, Al Ruffo -- I don't know, there was five, there were only five council people -- well Trammel he wasn't up for re-election. They put in three people, I guess the people were Renzel, Watson -- can't think of the other one, he was a real estate man. But anyway, they told Goodwin that he had to fire the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief, which were both Bigley appointments. Anyway, I don't know which one he fired first, course it was up to the City Manager to fire 'em. I don't know which one was fired first but he just called in and says, "The Council says to fire you and you're fired", (chuckle) which was very undiplomatic. So the three people went in and they talked to him and they said, "We didn't expect you to be so blunt about it, we expected you to have a \_\_\_\_\_, a dinner for the guy and then retire him in honor", you know. And he said, "Well, you told me to fire him so I fired him", and so they said, "Well if that's the way it's gonna be, you might as well go too." So that was about, oh, six or seven o'clock and the council meeting was right after that and I happened to be at the meeting, I used to go to a lot of council meetings and I happened to be at the council meeting, and Ray he very diplomatic

said that at six o'clock tonight Councilmen Renzel, Watson and the other guy I can't name came in and told me that they wished me to retire and so I'm retiring on leave. And there was a fellow who \_\_\_\_\_ owned a little grocery store on East Santa Clara Street that was one of these glad-handers and he got confused and he was really on the vote against it but he made a mistake and voted for it (laughter) so the motion carried four to one. But Earl Campbell, who was President of the Council at that time -- he was a college professor too -- but it seemed like these college professors came in and wanted to run the town; they didn't do a very good job at it. But anyway, the interim City Manager was John Mitch, who was City Clerk, and they had a deal at that time where City Manager had to come up for approval every two to four years and the next approval all of Goodwin's friends voted against him and he was ousted. And I can't remember just how long it was before Dutch Hamman came in, but he came in while Ruffo was still on the Council and Ruffo was a Santa Clara man and Dutch Hamman was a Santa Clara man, they had a very close tie there. And there was resentment on appointing Hamman because Hamman never had any experience, and matter of fact, at the time he was running the filling station down at Salinas but he turned out to be a terrific City Manager. He went a long time \_\_\_\_\_ was going, he brought things together.

And the beautiful part of Hamman, if you wanted somethin' like when I was on the Landmarks Commission if I had somethin' that I wanted to get over I'd go to Hamman and if Hamman okayed it it was a cinch, if you'd go before the Council it was just a matter of routine. But nowadays the Mayor's trying to run the town and I don't even know the name of the City Manager now. The last three Mayors have tried to run the town and I don't have any particular criticism of it but it's not run the way it's supposed to be set up. I kind of lost my train of thought there, oh yeah, Hamman. Today if you have somethin' you want to put across you gotta go to ten council people; most of 'em don't know beans about what's outside their district; for instance, they do some stupid things. We've been here 44 years in this house and last year they closed down the street on this end and put a thing up at that end you gotta' turn and we have a hard time gettin' out of the district; it's almost impossible for us to go downtown because with the new turns we take to go downtown. They're screwing up downtown shopping and yet you can't go there as a natural thing, they force us to go west. When Lean Jewelry Store closed down, that was my last connection with downtown, it's fizzled out. But the mayors seem to have taken over as the operating officer, which is all right if it's set up that way, it's not supposed to be that way. If they're gonna do that,

they ought to eliminate the City Manager. Why have a City Manager if you're gonna have a mayor running the town, which is all right, most towns have a mayor running it. But that's the way it goes.

EG Well, let's go back and talk for a couple minutes about some of the things that happened in the Twenties. This was when sound movies first came out. Can you recall going to the movies to see the early talking movies?

TF Course I'd always been pretty familiar with the theatrical situation in San Jose because my stepfather was a musician and worked at the Jose Theater so I'd always go to that one for nothin' and then I got to work for the newspapers and in those days we always got passes on all the newspapers so I went to a lot of shows in those days. Matter of fact, I went for years and never missed a change of show at the Jose Theater which changed twice a week. Insofar as the talkies \_\_\_\_\_, we had three movie houses on First Street: we had the California, which was in the 300 block of First Street -- I don't know what they call it now; then we had Beattie's American, which was in the 200 block on the west side; then we had the Mission, which was in the middle of the block of the 200 block on the east side and it was in that show that I saw the first talkie "Just Sam" and it

wasn't a talkie movie in the sense of the word that it is today because they had the play went on as usual but when it came to the singing the sound was on and you had 'em sing. So when it came to the talking part, there were just three songs on it -- maybe it was four, I don't remember -- but it was very effective and of course everybody was quite astounded and then \_\_\_\_\_, it had the full-length movie sound and then it just progressed so fast. I was down in Hollywood one time and I went to the -- I don't remember the name of the theater -- but they had the "Flower Drum Song" with 180 degrees of vision, you know, you sit there and you had 180 degrees of movies and it was the most spectacular thing. I think today, as far as movies are concerned, that was absolutely the most spectacular I ever saw and of course the "Flower Drum Song" was a cute picture anyway. Then when "My Fair Lady" came to out here at the shopping center, wherever it is out there by the Winchester House, it was supposed to be 180 degrees. Boy, was I enthused about that because I'd seen the stage show "My Fair Lady", which was a terrific show, and the whole thing was out of focus except one spot where the action was. A person really should have got their money back on that. After seeing that beautiful display in Hollywood and then seeing this one a few months later, it was a total disappointment.

EG Did you go to the movies quite a bit? Well you said you went twice a week whenever they changed their....

TF Well, after a while I got disillusioned with movies. I remember I went to a movie, I can remember the girl I went with too, and the movie was at the Padre. It was when I was in college, probably I was about a junior in college, I went to this movie and I thought it was the lousiest movie I ever saw. It was the type of movie that had a scene and you knew exactly what the next scene was gonna be. Everything was telegraphed and I wanted to leave but the girl didn't want to leave, she insisted on staying, so we stayed and that movie was named the best movie of the year, "It Happened One Night" with Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert. I thought that was the lousiest movie I ever saw and I didn't go to a movie for a long time after that. And usually for a while I limited myself to when the Oscars came out and awards made out and pick out two or three of those to go to but I was more impressed with the foreign movies than I was the American movies. I remember one Czechoslovakian movie that came out and won the first prize and of course Frances being a Czech we had to go see that. It was one of the most hilarious movies you could imagine. It was a war picture done with a comical background, very serious ending but it was a terrific movie. And you take



a movie like "Zorba the Greek", a terrific movie, but I don't know, I've been to so many movies that -- course when I go to a movie I want to be entertained and like every member of my family has seen "Gone With The Wind" at least twice but I've never been. They always come back and they're crying. I go to be amused, I don't want to go and cry. I have the book on tape and I couldn't see too much to cry about, it's just life as it goes on.

EG But do you remember when the Hotel De Anza opened? It's being restored now and due to reopen.

TF Well, I don't know if I remember when it opened or not but I remember before it was open and I remember after it was open because a friend of mine, Neal Roggi, was a draftsman on the hotel, he worked for a San Francisco company; he still lives over there on Calaveras Avenue. So he was the draftsman, he designed the entry to it and a lot of the inside, the lower floor and stuff. So before it was open or actually opened, he took us on a tour of the floors and all a complete tour. I don't know what year that was but that was before it was open. But then after it opened, they had a nice banquet room upstairs, not too big, but I remember when I graduated from college we had our senior dinner there at the little banquet hall. We had about, I think we had 400 people in

the class but only about 200 of them showed up for the dinner. It was quite a hotel for a long time, of course its handicap was when automobiles came in it didn't have any parking and that was one of the big handicaps. And also it seemed like most of the hotel people come to town they'd go to the Convention Center over there and it was kind of off the beaten track. But it got run-down, terribly run-down, and I'm glad to see it open but I just don't know exactly what type of clientele they're gonna gather. Matter of fact, I thought it was open already.

EG        Yeah it is, I'm....

TF        I oughta go down some day and to the best of my ability kind of look around the lobby.

EG        Very pretty.

TF        Well, it was a well-built hotel but one thing wrong with it, the rooms in those days were small and now it seems like when people stay in hotels they want big rooms and so forth. So I understand that they took three rooms and made two out of 'em and so the rooms are 50 percent bigger than they were originally but I don't know as that's a fact or not but I remember the rooms were quite small. I can tell one interesting thing that happened to

me in the Hotel De Anza. It must have been open in 1928 or '29 because Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig came to town and played an exhibition game here and Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, myself, Gene Travaskos(?), Sports Editor, and the manager of Babe Ruth sat in a hotel room for about an hour just throwing the ball and so that was my big event at the Hotel De Anza, but to show how things turn out, at that time I didn't even think to ask for an autograph or an autographed picture. We took pictures and I have a picture of Babe Ruth with my brother but never did take a picture of myself with him, but it just didn't mean anything. Everybody thought he was gonna be here forever, I guess, but I'd sure like to have a picture of myself with Babe Ruth and his autograph now. He was very amiable, he was a nice guy, and Gehrig was a nice guy but much quieter, of course. Babe Ruth more or less took the front. Of course he was in good health then, I think Gehrig died about six years later, but they were nice people.

EG            Okay, let's move on real quick to the Thirties. What about when the courthouse caught on fire. Do you have any memory of that when the dome fell?

TF            Well, I was at the fire, matter of fact I was taking a class in photography at the college at the time so I had

a camera and I took pictures of it which weren't too spectacular. You know when you got a building with smoke coming out of it that doesn't amount to too much really. And I don't remember the dome falling down, as a matter of fact, did it? Did the dome fall in? Well, anyway I don't remember it when I was there but it was just another fire. I think the Victory Theater fire was a lot more spectacular than that. Course that was on a Sunday morning and by that time I had a police pass and I could go through lines and get up close but I didn't get any pictures of it because the fire was inside and all you could look at was this brick wall with smoke coming out, but that was a spectacular fire too.

EG Well what about Prohibition? Can you tell me what you remember about how it affected the community.

TF Well of course when Prohibition went into effect, about 1918 I think, I was quite a kid; let's see, I was 13 years old at that time. Of course when I went to grammar school at Little Tijuana, Sunol School which I think we talked about before, Sunol School was backed up with all the vices of Little Tijuana including bootleggers so a lot of the kids that I went to grammar school with later were \_\_\_\_\_ with bootleggers or later themselves became bootleggers. I may have said this before but one

kid I went to grammar school with, the bootleggers used to have a picnic out at the Saratoga Long Barn every year and one councilman after drinking too much started brandishing a gun around and one of the kids I went to school with killed him (chuckle) to protect the other people and he was exonerated, it was justifiable homicide. Of course he had all the bootleggers for witnesses (laughter). But anyway, for a long time he had a bar on Post Street and I used to take a shortcut through Post Street and once in a while when I'd see him I'd wave to him and go in and say hello.

EG Do you remember the name of that bar?

TF It was on the northwest corner of Lightston Alley and Post, I don't remember the name of it, but it's gone now. He'd always want to buy me a drink but I settled for a 7Up. I've never been a drinker, I don't know (chuckle). I was in San Diego one time at a convention and a bunch of us critters were across the street at a bar and so I said, "Well I've never seen what the devil this liquor's all about." So I drank any drink that was bought for me, I bought drinks back, I don't know how many drinks I had but nothin' happened. I went to bed across the street, the hotel was just right across the street, about two o'clock in the morning I went back, went to bed, woke up,

no headache no nothin', nothin' happened. I said, "Well this is ridiculous with the money I spent" (laughter). The time was when I had my greatest defeat in salesmanship. I was supposed to be a printing salesman and when I used to go on trips I'd get brand new dollar bills and have them tattered like scratch pads so when I paid I'd tear off the dollar bills off the pad and this bartender he said, "Where do you get that? What's the \_\_\_\_\_?" He knew we were all printers. I said, "Oh", I says, "We print 'em ourselves. We do such a good job the Government doesn't mind, they let us do this." And he looked, he said, "You know", he said, "I'd like to get some of those." I looked at the pad and there was four or five left, I said, "I'll sell 'em to you for 90 cents apiece", and he wouldn't buy 'em (laughter). Boy, did my friends give me the razz that I couldn't sell him dollar bills for 90 cents (laughter).

EG           What about World War II and Pearl Harbor? What are your memories of that and rationing?

TF           Well, I had a lot of breaks in World War II. I had a friend in town, he was the head of the Merchants Association, very good friend of mine. At about, oh I guess about 10 o'clock in the morning, maybe earlier on a Sunday morning, he called me up, he says, "Turn the

radio on, channel" -- not channel, KGO -- "Turn KGO on."  
And so I did and 'course it was all about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. So that was the first I heard about it, then I called my mother and told her and of course she had two sons so she wasn't too happy (chuckle) about that. But just before rationing was going into effect I had gone to a friend of mine, a wholesale grocer -- and this was unknown about rationing -- but I'd bought a case of tomatoes, a case of pears, a case of peaches, I had at least 15 cases of products that were later all rationed and the reason I did that was because we only had one car at the time and 'course we had a baby and Frances had to -- well the baby was expected, that was it -- the baby was born on January 29 but she'd have to walk to the grocery store and didn't want to have to carry all these groceries so that was why I had to get these groceries and get 'em in the house. But 90 days later everything was rationed (chuckle) and so we had all these supplies and of course we had our regular ration quota besides. But on gasoline, as a salesman I had a pretty good allocation of gas and there were certain stations, like if I had to go to Los Angeles I'd leave here with a tank full of gas and if I got to Paso Robles and went over to what is Highway 33 there's a gasoline station there that'd sell you gas without coupons and so then you'd get to Los Angeles, then you'd have to fill up to get back to

here. So in other words, I'd go to Los Angeles on a minimum number of tickets (chuckle). And then I always bought my gas from one person and so every once in a while he'd give me a few extra gallons. Matter of fact, I still got unused gas coupons. But it was quite a problem for a lot of people to purchase a few. I remember we had one show come up here one time, this Banner helped us put it on, and the people comin' down from San Francisco they'd come down to Rianda's Supply besides to pay so many gas ration tickets. There was a lot of trading and maneuvering and stuff like that but as I say I had B rations, which was a salesman's rations, and so I was never short of gas. And I was never short of food because we had such a head start with these 15 cases of groceries that we bought entirely unaware that that was gonna happen. I remember we had a couple over for dinner and he was a grocer and after he'd finished eating he says, "You know, I can't help but notice everything you serve is by \_\_\_\_\_" (laughter) and so I explained to him what happened, he said well I was very lucky.

EG I understand you served on the Fire Department during World War II.

TF Of course the Fire Department in case of a big emergency



would be handicapped by a manpower shortage so every station had a voluntary auxiliary to it and I was the Chief of the whole auxiliary and we'd have meetings and try to encourage attendance and put up things we wanted and get the things right. So I was the Chief for about two years and then I resigned being I had a Captain, terrific guy, fellow by the name of Carson, and he wanted to be Chief and I wanted him to be because I was tired of workin' on it so I retired as Chief -- I was still a member -- I retired as Chief and he got the job. I never could find out what happened to the Chief's badge. He died very shortly afterwards so I tried to chase it down, I could never find out. We had the same badge as the Fire Department, the only thing ours said Auxiliary on it, but I had a beautiful Chief's badge but never could find out what happened to it. I should'a kept it and bought another one, I wish I had now. But we used to respond to fires, if there was a fire out of our district -- out of our house, I mean -- but we never had a fire disaster during the war years but I think we were pretty well prepared for it. As a matter of fact, the industrial tracts organized auxiliary units too and the one at Food Machinery's still in existence. They still have fire drills and people belong to that and the company gives 'em a dinner once a year and that goes on. Well that's been in existence, let's see, by gosh that's

50 years ago this year.

EG        It's been a while, hasn't it. Well, at the end of World War II San Jose began to change from growing and agriculture to manufacturing. Can you in just a very short time give your feelings about that happening.

TF        Well I think one of the most interesting comments I recall is of a French industrialist visiting with John D. Crummy, President of Food Machinery Company, and they'd taken him on a tour of the Valley because at that time Santa Clara Valley grew more French prunes than all France. And he told Crummy, according to Crummy, he says, "Well, when I come back here, you'll have all these ugly orchards out and you'll have beautiful subdivisions." (Laughter) And how true that fellow was because immediately after the war when the thousands of GI's had gone through town from Fort Ord or from different places, I think -- was Fremont in existence then? Fremont was World War I -- but anyway, they had these thousands of people going through town and veterans going through town and they all wanted to come back to California. And so original imports after the war were returning veterans and then it just got out of hand, I don't know, and so the orchards are gone. About 25 years ago I had somebody come to town wanted to go to see the

blossoms; I'd gone to college with her and she wanted to see the blossoms. I couldn't find a blossom orchard, a prune orchard, and that's the way it was. I guess it could be called progress but it's not better living, for that I'm sure, but of course it's more stable and such because depending on the fruit orchards was a precarious thing at best. You were subject to the rain and weather conditions and so forth. It always rained in cherry season but this year we didn't have any cherries and it didn't rain, I don't know (laughter). But the post-war deal was just a natural thing, I guess, because of climate. The more people came the more people were encouraged to come and then of course in this area we had the \_\_\_\_\_ at Stanford University. That was where the \_\_\_\_\_ television tube was invented -- out of there, not at Stanford, but people associate it with Stanford. \_\_\_\_\_ was invented and that was a big boost in television and local in college. Then when Shockley invented the transistor tube all these people started booming in and it kept going from there so now the employment in the computer business electronics is phenomenal and I guess there's no way of stoppin' it.

EG That changed our Valley, didn't it?

TF Totally, well two things. Nobody wanted to pick prunes

or cut cots, which Frances and I had both of 'em, and there was need for housing, which was better steadier employment. I guess it's a change for the better but sometimes in retrospect it's kind'a hard to take. You kind'a wish for the good old days which are gone, swipe a few cherries (chuckle).

EG Well Theron, I'd like to thank you much for all the time you've spent giving us this interview and I hope that perhaps in the future if we come up with other subjects that we can talk in more detail on that we can come back.

TF Well you know, talk is one of my best attributes (chuckle). My memory fails me a little as I miss some names in there. That real estate man whose name I couldn't remember is Victor Olin, just came to me.

EG Victor?

TF Victor Olin, it was Renzo, Watson & Olin. See, it just came to me.

(End of Tape 3, Side 2.)